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THE AUTHOR

1917

*ANNALS OF AN ACTIVE
LIFE. By General The
Rt. Hon. Sir Nevil Macready
Bart., G.C.M.G., K.C.B.*

With Sixteen Illustrations.

VOLUME I.

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I

TO THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.D.C.	Aide-de-Camp.
A.G.	Adjutant-General.
B.E.F.	British Expeditionary Force.
C.C.S.	..	..	Casualty Clearing Station.
C.-in-C.	..	..	Commander-in-Chief.
C.I.D.	..	..	Criminal Investigation Department.
C.I.G.S.	..	..	Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
D.M.P.	..	..	Dublin Metropolitan Police.
D.O.R.A.	..	..	Defence of the Realm Act.
G.H.Q.	..	..	General Headquarters.
I.G.C.	..	..	Inspector-General of Communications.
I.R.A.	..	..	Irish Republican Army.
M.A.C.	..	..	Motor Ambulance Convoy.
N.C.O.	..	..	Non-Commissioned Officer.
N.I.V.	..	..	National Irish Volunteers.
N.U.P.P.O.	..	..	National Union of Police and Prison Officers.
P.M.	..	..	Prime Minister.
Q.M.A.A.C.	..	..	Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps.
Q.M.G.	..	..	Quartermaster-General.
R.I.C.	..	..	Royal Irish Constabulary.
R.O.I.R.	..	..	Restoration of Order in Ireland Regulations.
S.F.	..	..	Sinn Féin.
U.V.F.	..	..	Ulster Volunteer Force.
V.A.D.	..	..	Voluntary Aid Detachments (Red Cross Society).
W.A.A.C.	..	..	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

ANNALS OF AN ACTIVE LIFE

CHAPTER I.

“WEDNESDAY, May 7th, 1862.—I cannot begin the entry of this day without giving expression to my thanks to the Almighty Giver of all good for the safe delivery of my dearest wife and for the birth of another son. Blessed be His name! Amen! Most devoutly and gratefully do I thank God for all His many mercies to me, unworthy as I am! I cannot yet analyse my feelings. I am most thankful for the safety of my beloved wife, and I welcome this dear pledge of her love, but I cannot avoid looking into the future, and that, too, naturally with apprehension and distrust.”

Thus my father, William Charles Macready, noted in his diary my entrance on to the stage of life. A little more than eleven years had passed since he had bidden farewell to the stage and retired to the seclusion of the country town of Sherborne, where to this day his name is held in remembrance in connection with his interest in the education of the poorer classes, and his successful efforts to resuscitate the literary institution of the town.

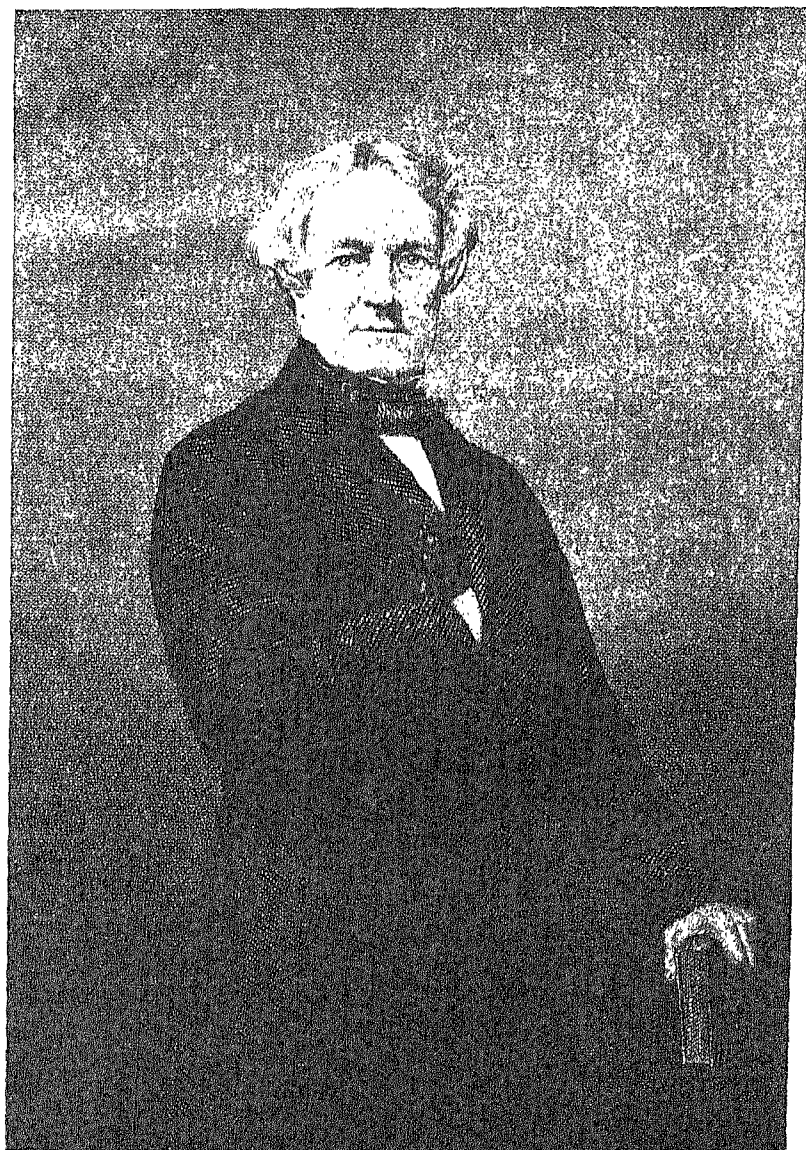
I have often thought that the sudden and complete severance from the literary and artistic world in which he had moved for so many years, and the plunge into the narrow parochialism of a small country town not linked up at that time by rail to the metropolis, in a great degree induced the tinge of melancholy so noticeable in his later diaries. At Sherborne, too, the hand of death had been busy with his loved ones. His wife, his sister (the constant friend and companion of the years of struggle and of success), and three of his children passed away during his residence there.

On the 1st April, 1860, my father notes in his diary: “Sat for the last time in this house at dinner with my beloved children.

I could not suppress my tears at the thought ; at the many memories that circled round that table ; the dear ones gone ; the happy and the mournful events that had passed before it." Two days later, at St. John's Church, Clifton, my father and mother were married very quietly, and later took up their residence at 6 Wellington Square, Cheltenham, where, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, I put in an appearance in due course. Had either of my parents been believers in the idea of heredity, surely I should have been destined for an artistic career ! On my father's side two generations of the stage, and on my mother's a great-grandfather in the person of Sir William Beechey, R.A., painter to George III, would seem enough to implant a germ that might reasonably be expected to develop into some form of artistic pursuit.

However, it was not to be ! I was far too lazy as a boy to trouble about drawing or painting, and any idea of the stage as a profession for one of the family was anathema to my father. It is not an exaggeration to say that he would rather have seen a child of his in his coffin than on the stage. And is it to be wondered at ? His diaries* teem with expressions of the agonies—it is not too strong a word—he endured in his endeavour to raise his art to the level he had set himself to attain : an endeavour thwarted by the rapacity, ignorance, and incapacity of those among whom his lot was cast. Further, his proud and sensitive nature felt keenly the social position, or rather the lack of social position, held by members of the profession in his day. Had he lived to see the stage taking the place it holds to-day, its leaders welcomed by the world as representatives of a great art, his sweeping condemnation of the profession might have been modified. The following extract from his diary shows how deeply he felt on this subject :—

* "Macready's Reminiscences," by Sir F. Pollock, Bt. Macmillan & Co.
"Diaries of William Charles Macready," by William Toynbee. Chapman and Hall



Engraved by D. J. Pount from a photograph by Skeolan, Cheltenham

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY

1862

“ 31st December, 1862.—At dinner I received a registered letter. When the table was cleared I opened it, but in reading it was so moved by its contents that I thought it better to retire to the library. It was from a gentleman of the name of Day, enclosing a letter which I had written to him in very strong terms dissuading him from remaining on the stage, whither a youthful whim or passion had led him, and in vehement language urging his return to his distressed father. He had followed my counsel, and in consequence had grown in repute and means, and now after the lapse of twenty-six years writes to tell me of the results of my advice, and to express his gratitude, requesting me at the same time to accept a gold pencil-case in memorial of his sense of obligation to me. In his letter he says : ‘ How often have he (his father) and I blessed you, when years afterwards witnessing the creation of your genius ! ’ This unlooked-for incident came to my heart on this day as if a mercy from Heaven to bless the closing of the year. It touched me very deeply, and I felt comforted in having been the humble instrument in God’s hand of serving a fellow-creature. It occupied my mind long, gravely, but happily.”

Some years afterwards this same gentleman, Mr. W. C. Day, took up the cudgels on my father’s behalf in the press against an attack made on him by the late G. A. Sala.

Curiously enough, while my father’s first wife had been an actress before her marriage, my mother was utterly ignorant of things theatrical, her only acquaintance with the theatre being when as a child of six she was once taken to hear Grisi at the opera in Paris. Naturally, therefore, she accepted unquestioningly my father’s views on the drama and its exponents. The result was that as a small boy I was forbidden by “ bell, book, and candle ” ever to set foot within a theatre. I have, however, some faint recollections of having saved up sixpences, and on one or two occasions penetrated into the gallery of the old Cheltenham

Theatre, whose boards the great Siddons once trod, and on the site of which the Cheltenham Ladies' College now stands.

The generation that knew my father in his professional days has now passed behind the curtain, and those who conjure up what manner of man he was from reading his reminiscences and diaries would hardly recognize the kindly old gentleman, with a profusion of white hair and a courteous word for all and sundry, that rises up before my earliest memory. My half-brother and sister were somewhat in awe of him, mainly, I fancy, because of his insatiable desire to instruct them. Highly educated himself, reading the Greek Testament every morning of his life, and the Latin, French and Italian classics as his daily fare, he could not understand why his children should not attain similar heights of learning. But it is not given to everybody to be head boy of Rugby at sixteen. My unfortunate half-brother—the late J. F. C. H. Macready, F.R.C.S.—suffered tortures over his Latin prose and Greek verse, and so I gather did my parent. Happily for myself, I was too young to be awed by anyone, more especially by governesses, one of whom I remember left suddenly because, safely ensconced under a table, I called her a “ Tasmanian Devil,” having lately seen an animal of that name at the Zoo !

To my father, however, I owe an unfailing debt of gratitude for having taught me to read—not only to read but *how* to read. I can see myself now, a small, fat boy, at one end of the library, which seemed a very big room ; my father, his white head slightly bent, in his easy chair at the other end of the room. The piece chosen was “ The Vision of Mirza,” beautiful English, but somewhat wearisome to a small boy once he had mastered the allegory. As a start I had to open my mouth three times till the jaws cracked. Then at each syllable the jaw-cracking experience was repeated, the tongue and lips being moved to ensure the correct enunciation of each letter. Having repeated a sentence several times in this

manner, syllable by syllable, I was allowed to read it through without the jaw-cracking operation, though constantly stopped by such remarks as : " I cannot hear the ' d ' in ' and ', " and then the tongue had to be put firmly against the palate and the " d " given its full effect.

I do not know how elocution is taught to-day, although I do know that it is the exception and not the rule to hear clearly performers either in the pulpit or on the stage, but as a foundation of clear enunciation, accustoming the lips, tongue, and breath to play their part and thus prepare a pupil for the more advanced stages of elocution, I doubt if my father's method can be improved upon.

To " The Vision of Mirza " succeeded Milton, Burke, Pope, and other giants of our native tongue in my repertoire of reading. While his health permitted, my father made a practice of reading aloud to the family each evening, always preparing carefully his selections beforehand. His choice ranged from Shakespeare and plays by authors of his own time to the fiction of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, and other works which he considered instructive to his hearers. Unfortunately I was too young to be included in the family circle on those occasions, and by the time my hour for bed had been sufficiently postponed my father was too ailing to continue his readings. This has been a lifelong regret to me, for, from the description given by those who had the privilege to hear him, the experience must have been exceptionally enjoyable.

For the first ten years of his residence at Cheltenham, my father spent his days mainly among the books he loved so well, taking at the same time an intense interest in all recent publications, and noting in his diary the thoughts and criticisms on his day's reading. These are of special interest coming from one who for so many years had thrown himself heart and soul into the task of presenting to the public all that was best in the artistic literature of our country. To do so with the success which he achieved

entailed a deep and constant study of literature, classic and modern, in order to attain that fine discrimination so necessary to the perfect understanding of the task. Shakespeare and Milton he placed on the summit of his Olympus. He records: "Read in Shakespeare the fourth act of 'Winter's Tale.' Beautiful, beautiful poet." Again: "Read in the third book of 'Paradise Lost.' Who, after Shakespeare, is to be mentioned with Milton?" And again: "Read in Milton—a never-satiating enjoyment."

Of a playwright of his own day—Sheridan Knowles*—several of whose plays he produced, he says: "Looked through Knowles's play of 'William Tell,' which I find he subsequently altered from its original arrangement, and by no means improved. The object was apparent, viz., to make a scene for his second wife, greatly I think to the detriment of the play's effect."

My father notes the death of Mrs. Browning in the following words: "Looked over the papers; saw the death of Mrs. Browning, a highly gifted woman and most amiable with all her knowledge and great talent—the wife of my very much-esteemed friend, Browning." Of Browning's poetry he later makes an apt remark with which many who have studied Browning's works will find themselves in agreement: "Read an article in *The Quarterly Review* on Browning's poetry. I would wish to correct my judgment, and my personal feeling towards Browning makes me desirous of thinking highly of his talents as a poet; but I can with difficulty make out his meaning in many places, in some not at all. To me the first excellence of a poet is perspicuity, and in Browning's writing I am constantly embarrassed by his obscurity. This may be a virtue to some tastes; to mine it is a formidable objection."†

* James Sheridan Knowles (1784-1862). Actor and dramatist. The name-part in his play of "Virginius," produced in 1820, was one of my father's favourite characters, and the piece remained in his repertoire till his retirement from the stage.

† It is of interest to remember that "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" was written by Browning in 1842 to amuse my father's eldest son, William Charles, when he was confined to the house with a cough.



National Portrait Gallery

ROBERT BROWNING

After reading Carlyle's " Frederick II, he describes the book as a " hateful subject, and one in which a man so true as Carlyle should not have striven to have warped the judgment of his readers, and have made the ' worse appear the better argument.' " How truly might the criticism be equally applied to Carlyle's " French Revolution " !

My father's comments on Thackeray's " Adventures of Philip on his Way through the World," which was published serially in *The Cornhill Magazine* in 1861, were no doubt justified if severe. He says : " Thackeray talks in his novels too much as himself, or as Pendennis, which is nearly the same—the same in the effect of its weariness " ; and further on : " Read the serial number of ' Philip,' which becomes prosy in its idle gossip to absolute weariness. It stands in unenviable contrast with Dickens's beautifully told story " (" Great Expectations "). And he concludes his remarks with : " One of the duller books I have read for a very long time."

Two years later my father records the death of Thackeray : " Taking up the paper to look at before going to bed, was dreadfully shocked and greatly grieved to read the death of Thackeray. I had a sincere regard for him, though not *quite* understanding him."

For Charles Dickens my father had a deep affection and admiration. Of all his friendships that for Dickens was never disturbed by the slightest touch of disagreement or estrangement, while for the great writer's genius he had unbounded admiration. The entry in the diaries concerning " Great Expectations," referred to above, is indicative of the value set upon the work, which he again emphasizes : " Read in ' Great Expectations,' and finished the third volume. On considering the whole work, I think it (' under the wand of the enchanter ' I hazard the judgment) the most perfect and best narrated of any of his stories. The style is carefully preserved from affectation or extravagance ; the

humour, the satire, the pathos are blended in most harmonious admixture, and the moral to be deduced is of the purest and best kind."

In another place my father records a visit of Dickens to Cheltenham for the purpose of giving a public reading in the Assembly Rooms: "Went to Lansdown Station to meet Dickens. It was a truly joyous meeting. He came with me home, and attending to domestic affairs we passed a very cheerful, pleasant evening. I thank God for all things!" The following day: "We went into Dickens's room and thence were ushered to our seats. He read from 'Nicholas Nickleby' and 'The Boots of the Holly Tree Inn.' His reading was very artistic, giving point and force to every prominent passage. It was a very interesting and satisfactory evening's entertainment. Returning home we chatted pleasantly till bedtime."

A second reading was given the next day. "Walked to the Assembly Rooms. Dickens read an abridgment of 'David Copperfield' *admirably*. The humour was delightful, and the pathos of various passages gave me a choking sensation, whilst the account of Emily's flight brought the tears from my eyes. The reading of the story was altogether a truly artistic performance. My dear friend left us as pleased, I believe, with his visit as we were delighted with his company."

That Charles Dickens, quite apart from his genius as a writer, had a large share of dramatic talent there is no doubt. Of him, my father, who had a profound contempt for amateur actors, said that of all those whose performances he had seen, Charles Dickens alone would have come to the front on the professional stage.

Dickens, much to my father's enjoyment, repeated his visits to Cheltenham, visits which were red-letter days to his old friend, and on more than one occasion my father enjoyed the hospitality of Gadshill. Describing one of these visits, he says: "Walked out into the grounds, explored the tunnel, plantation, etc., and

found all most complete—a truly delightful residence. After breakfast went over the house with Dickens. Everything to command; nothing to be wished for; elegance and comfort throughout. Read in Dickens's 'Uncommercial Traveller'; amused by it. Charles Collins and his wife Katie arrived; was glad to see them, and like him very much. Certainly felt intolerant of Forster's supercilious mention of him; walked with him and Dickens into the woods of Cobham Park, close at hand. Had a very pleasant dinner and very agreeable evening of chat."

The mention of Forster recalls another name that constantly crops up in my father's later diaries. Since the year 1833, what may be termed an interrupted friendship had existed between them. I say "interrupted friendship" advisedly, because Forster's somewhat autocratic and high-handed bearing, even towards his friends, was hardly calculated to pass unnoticed or at times unresented by my father. Their last disagreement, due to Forster's attitude towards my father's second marriage, was smoothed over through the good offices of Charles Dickens, and from that time to my father's death their friendship remained unbroken.

The only reference to Forster's works in the later diaries is a note on the life of Sir John Eliot: "Read and made way in Forster's 'Eliot'—a very interesting work. One mistake he has made, viz., in telling us so often what he is 'going to tell us.' " Of interest, too, is the following criticism on Lockhart's "Life of Sir Walter Scott": "Finished Lockhart's 'Life of Scott,' in which I have been much interested. The biographer's dissertations on his character are often lengthy, and not always in the most lucid style, but it is a valuable book. With whatever mistakes Sir Walter Scott may have made in life, it is impossible, I think, to deny him the character of a *great and good man*. We wish, as we read, that he had never descended (I say descended because it was done *covertly* and against the rule of his profession) to be

partner in a trading firm, and that he had been less bigoted in his politics ; but those blemishes are lightly considered in the blaze of his deserts. He was a great and good man ; but the greatest and the best of *men* have had their foibles."

Curious it is to read my father's criticism on " *La Nouvelle Heloise*,"* a book that to-day would pass unnoticed so far as its moral aspect is concerned. He says : " Read in ' *La Nouvelle Heloise*,' which I find full of wisdom, and in many instances just sentiments and opinions, although the moral likely to be inculcated by the interest of the story may carry mischief with it to young and impressionable natures. It is a book to read when the age of passion is past, but *not*, I think, *till then*." Again : " Read in ' *La Nouvelle Heloise* ' some admirable letters on dependence on the Almighty. It is very much to be lamented that the story itself has so bad a moral, as the sentiments and the reasoning on duty are so often *admirable*." On finishing the book, he adds : " I wish I had read that book many years ago ; it might have taught me—it ought to have done so—much wisdom, real wisdom. The book has been most unjustly defamed."

After reading the above criticism it is almost startling to find my father describing Fielding's " *Tom Jones* " in these words : " What novel-writing can be compared with it for consistency of character, truth of description, wit, sentiment, or style ? " It must be remembered that before reading books of the type of " *Tom Jones* " to the family, all passages which my father considered undesirable were carefully expunged.

Of Adelaide Proctor's† poems he records : " Very beautiful, but monotonous in their character," and on the same leaf of the diary is a reference to the " *Life of Dr. Arnold* "‡ : " How beautiful in life and in death that man ! Let me, O God, learn a lesson of piety and true devotion from it. Amen ! " Then, two

* " *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*," by Jean Jacques Rousseau.

† Adelaide Ann Proctor (1825-1864). The distinguished poetess.

‡ Thomas Arnold, D.D. (1795-1842). Head master of Rugby, 1828-1842. Author of historical and religious works.

days later : " Finished the perusal of ' Arnold's Life '—a work that has greatly interested me. With *almost* every sentiment he entertained, every opinion on public affairs, religious or political, I more or less sympathize."

Much of my father's time in the intervals of reading was occupied in sorting out masses of correspondence he had preserved and in writing his autobiography, which, however, was only carried up to the year 1833. When going over old letters he remarks : " In many of them I saw great cause for self-reproach and perceived how unwisely I frequently acted, and what an enemy I had in the weakness and violence of my temper. God forgive me ! " Now and again the visits of old friends greatly cheered him, and I am glad that I was just old enough to carry some of them in my remembrance. Charles Dickens's affectionate nature could not but appeal to children, and I well remember how I looked forward to his arrival when I heard he was to pay us a visit. John Forster invariably brought me an armful of toys from London, yet I was either afraid of him or shy with him, and Dickens was always delighted to get me on to his knee and " draw " me about his friend Forster. I cannot, of course, remember what I may have said about that " harbitary gent," as a cabman is reputed to have called Forster, but whatever it was vastly pleased Dickens and, I fear, somewhat shocked my father, who was a great upholder of the " seen and not heard " attitude for children.

One incident relating to Charles Dickens I remember as if it happened yesterday. On one of his visits I was allowed down to dessert at dinner, and put on a chair next to the great, kindly novelist. He asked me what I would like to have off the table. I nodded towards some green things on a small dish which I had never seen before. They were olives, and Dickens burst out laughing. My father interfered, and said something about it being absurd for a child to touch them, etc. Dickens, however, was determined to have some amusement, and asked me if I would

promise to eat one, even if I did not like it. I said I would, and I ate that olive. The next time I ate one was in 1884, when travelling in Palestine.

Julius Benedict,* the composer, I remember to have heard playing the piano in our drawing-room, and in the far-away distance I can see a stout, pleasant-faced lady, who in after years I saw at St. George's Hall, London—Mrs. German Reed—who, as Priscilla Horton, played Ariel in my father's production of "The Tempest." In 1863 the diaries record a previous visit she and her husband paid to our house: "Mr. and Mrs. German Reed came to lunch. She sang 'Where the Bee Sucks,' which brought back a host of stirring recollections—dear friends, long since departed, beloved ones removed from me, the public leaning to me, so earnest in their enthusiasm; a mass of thoughts crowded on my memory and 'forced those waters to my eyes' that I would rather have repressed. I was truly glad to see my old friend again." How often have I wished that she had sung that song during one of her later visits, when it might have taken a permanent abode in my memory.

In the autumn of 1860 my father attended a performance of "The Messiah" at Worcester Cathedral, his account of which is interesting as recalling some of the great singers of the past: "We enjoyed the performance of 'The Messiah.' I have never heard Sims Reeves† since he was my second tenor at Drury Lane Theatre. His voice I thought of the very best I had ever heard, and his expression remarkably good. Madame Novello, too, with her rich, clear voice, gave great effect to her music. 'He was Despised,' by Madame Dolby, did not at all impress me as the same air did—forty years ago—when sung by the contralto, Madame Marconi. The most touching of the various pieces,

* Sir Julius Benedict (1804-1885). Conductor and composer.

† John Sims Reeves (1822-1900). Celebrated tenor. He made his first appearance at Newcastle in 1839.

executed by far the best in my opinion, was the 'Behold and Pity,' by Sims Reeves."

In 1861 Jenny Lind* and her husband, Otto Goldschmidt, paid a professional visit to Cheltenham, which my father thus records: "Went out with Katie (his eldest daughter) and called on Madame Goldschmidt. Found her the same unchanged, simple-hearted, frank, amiable person; sat long talking with her and engaged to drink tea with her. . . . Went to tea with the Goldschmidts; met Belletti and Piatti. Liked them very much, and talked a good deal with Otto Goldschmidt, whom I found very intelligent and agreeable."

From time to time my mother's mother, Mrs. Spencer, a daughter of Sir William Beechey, who was just a year younger than my father, used to come and visit us, and I well remember the little old lady, in her close, old-fashioned widow's cap, playing to my father, as he sat in his easy chair, the airs that had been popular when they were young people some six decades before. In her day the old lady had sung well, and played both the harp and the piano. As a girl, in her father's house in Harley Street, she had seen most of the prominent personages of the dawn of the nineteenth century. Nelson and Lord St. Vincent were godfathers to two of her brothers, and the former dined at her father's house a few days before embarking for the cruise which ended in the Battle of Trafalgar. As he was leaving the house he asked Sir William Beechey what he would like him to give his godson. Sir William asked for the cocked-hat Nelson had worn at the Battle of the Nile. It is still in the family.

From the stories the old lady used to tell of her girlhood in Harley Street—she married when she was seventeen—it is evident that she and her sisters were not backward in extracting much harmless fun out of life, and in making the most of the

* Jenny Lind (1820-1887). Celebrated singer. Appeared in 1838 in the rôle of Agatha in "Der Freischütz." Last public appearance in July, 1883.

foibles and peculiarities of the leading men and women of the day who commissioned the Court painter to paint their portraits.

One story I remember because in after years the threads became linked up in my own family. Looking out of their windows into Harley Street, beyond which in those days was the open country, the Beechey girls used to see a stout gentleman and his equally stout wife drive daily into town in a pony-chaise drawn by a fat pony. The gentleman was John Rolls, and perhaps naturally the girls christened the pair "Rolls and Butter." The stout gentleman was the grandfather of the first Lord Llangattock, and great-grandfather of that gallant pioneer of motoring and aviation, Charlie Rolls. In the course of time John Rolls's daughter married my uncle, Major Edward Nevil Macready. He was some six years younger than my father, and through the latter's financial assistance was able to take up the Army as a profession. Indeed, had it not been for this call upon his resources there is little doubt but that my father would have thrown up the stage and have tried his fortune at the Bar.

My uncle served as a volunteer in the Low Countries in 1814, and during that year purchased his commission as ensign in the 30th Regiment of Foot (now the East Lancashire Regiment). At Waterloo he brought the remains of the Light Company of his regiment out of action at the end of the day, and has left a vivid account of the battle on record from a regimental officer's point of view. He served afterwards with his regiment in India, being present at the siege of Bhurtpore, and on the Staff as Town Major at Corfu. His last appointment was that of Military Secretary to General Sir John Wilson,* Commander of the Forces in Ceylon, and while in that capacity he acted as second to his chief in a duel Sir John fought with the Chief Justice on the Galle Face. When I was serving with my regiment in Ceylon I often used to smile

* General Sir John Wilson (1780-1856). Commissioned to 28th Regiment 1794. Served in Egypt 1801 at the Battle of Aboukir, and in the Peninsular War. Commanded the troops in Ceylon, 1830-1848.



Sport & General Press Agency, Ltd.

STATUE OF JENNY LIND, " THE SWEDISH NIGHTINGALE "
Unveiled at the Royal Djurgården, Stockholm, Sweden

when I contemplated a duel between the then holders of those high-placed appointments !

My uncle died in 1849, before I was born, but his widow—" Aunt Patty," as she was known to us—lived in Cheltenham to a ripe old age. I was rather a favourite with the old lady, merely, I think, on account of being the only member of the family in the Army. As a small boy, however, I nearly fell for ever into her black books ; indeed I am not sure that my name was ever entirely erased. My uncle was buried in the pretty country churchyard at Leckhampton, near Cheltenham, and my aunt had enclosed the grave with trellis-work, which in summer-time was covered with creepers and rambler roses. At one end was a bower with two seats, quite hidden in summer from the outside, where the old lady and her confidential maid used to sit and read. One fine day some small boys from a dame's school, which I attended at the time, went for a walk to Leckhampton, and peering through the trellis-work read the inscription on the stone, but could not see into the bower. One of them shrilled out : " Oh ! here is Nevil Macready's uncle's grave. His wife treated him so badly when he was alive that she now comes and cries over him." Suddenly a tall figure in black appeared from behind the roses, and said sharply : " Little boys shouldn't tell lies." My school companions took to their heels, in some doubt as to whether it was not the major himself who had risen to admonish them ! I really do not think I was guilty, for I have always understood that my uncle and his wife lived on terms of the happiest intimacy, but I am afraid I was henceforth always regarded with some suspicion by my Aunt Patty.

Of the murder of Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, my father makes the following note in his diary : " The confirmation of the report of Lincoln's death, with further particulars, arrived. The perpetrator of this foul murder is, it appears, a player—his name Booth, son of Lucius Junius Booth,

who acted so disgraceful a part in his first London engagement, and who had a short-lived notoriety from his resemblance on the stage to Kean.* This man, Lucius Junius, was guilty of an act, shooting at and wounding a pantomimist in Queen's Square, Bristol, that was near being a murder. I think I heard of him in America as being occasionally deranged, but I gave little attention to the mention of his name. His offspring is worthy of him."

The mention of Kean recalls one of the few outbursts which my father permitted himself during the later years of his life on reading an account of a presentation to Charles Kean†: "Looked over the paper. Read cursorily the account of a rich testimonial to Mr. C. Kean, chiefly set on foot and forwarded by Etonians. I can only look upon it as one of the fruits of the most systematic cultivation of imposture and humbug that I have ever known. No money has been spared in purchasing the venal suffrages of the greater portion of the press, and no means of puffing left untried to gull and blind the ignorant portion of the public. My contemporaries, Kemble, Young, Edmund Kean, C. Kemble, were all distinguished artists. This man has no pretension to the title."

If now and again the asperity of his younger days flickered up in my father's remarks on men and affairs, it was generally tempered by the mellow consideration of age, as is seen in the following extract:—

"4th September, 1865.—Read a very depreciatory notice of myself in my public character from *The Pall Mall Gazette*, which, of course, gave me no pleasure to peruse. But the man's abuse of me is bread to him, and I may be thankful that my calling did not lay me under the necessity of giving pain to others for my daily sustenance. . . . On reviewing the article referred to above, I am disposed to retract the idea that the writer intended to depreciate

* Edmund Kean (1787-1833). The celebrated actor.

† Son of Edmund Kean (1811-1868). Actor.

my claims to public approbation. I think him perfectly honest in his opinions, and but for some occasional expressions—certain epithets in comparison—I should regard it as a very intelligent and sound criticism. I think the author is a man who, if the injurious effects of these epithets were pointed out to him, would be willing to qualify them. I part with him in the best feeling and with respect for his talent. I would all my critics had been equally just.”

An interesting reference to my father’s Rugby school days occurs in the same year : “ Read in the obituary the death of Mrs. Wool, the widow of my old master, Dr. Wool.* I remember dancing with her at the Rugby School Ball in the year 1808. She was then a very pretty woman, greatly admired by us schoolboys. She died at the age of 91. ‘ Another and another and another.’ ”

During the last ten years of his life my father’s health gave him considerable uneasiness, more from apprehension of suffering and anxiety at the thought of leaving those he loved—an anxiety increased through the loss of a considerable amount of money during the American War of Secession—than from any fear of death. Indeed, he was deeply religious in a simple, unobtrusive way, though scathing in his opinion on set form and ceremony in worship. As the anniversaries of the deaths of his loved ones came round year after year he never failed to give expression to the hope of reunion in a future existence. One example, of an entry on the anniversary of his daughter Lillie’s death, is typical : “ My beloved, lovely child, my sweet Lillie, my prayers to God are that I may again meet thy angel spirit in that world of bliss to which thou art sure to be translated, if I may hold faith in the destiny of purity and innocence. God bless thee, my beloved ! ”

His belief in a state of immortality was expressed in the

* The Rev. John Wool, D.D. (1767-1833). Head master of Rugby during the latter part of my father’s time at that school.

following words : " Read in *La Revue* the termination of the article on " *La Vie Future*," in which I met with speculations on the soul's immortality and the possibility of its transference to others of those worlds of which the Almighty has given us the sight around us ! A most interesting conjecture, which has frequently engaged my own meditations, and become impressed almost as a truth, and certainly a belief, in my mind."

Although most strict in household religious observances, my father seems never to have succeeded in discovering a form of public worship that satisfied his ideal. The formal ritual of the Church of England made no appeal to a mind in search of something more simple and more all-embracing of mankind, as the following extracts from his diaries show : " Rose early in the hope of enabling dear Cécile (his wife) to go and take the Sacrament at an early hour. This I was most anxious for ; my heart was with her in her feelings for the rite which I could have wished to have partaken with her, if in a more simple and *Christian* form than that of the Church of England, with its distinction between rich and poor, its paid priests and cold formality."

Later on he continues : " Went to church, where I had the pain of hearing the Athanasian Creed, and observing the number of people repeating it who knew nothing of what they were saying beyond the monstrous, uncharitable denunciation with which it concludes. And this anti-Christian farrago of absurdity is not to be questioned or examined, but to be taken as an ordinance of our Divine Master ! Mr. C., in his sermon (which was not a very good one, not equal to former discourses), delivered a rebuke on those who were irregular in their attendance. As one admitting the charge, I did not think his animadversions likely to influence persons like myself to become his more punctual disciples. It is *in our own minds* that we must truly worship."

Occasionally my father attended various Nonconformist places of worship, but the crudeness and lack of culture of some of the

ministers left him still unsatisfied. He sums up his aspirations in the following extracts : “ Finished Channing’s beautiful *inspired* discourse on the consecration of the Unitarian Church in New York. It is irresistible in argument, and in the loftiest, purest and most religious sense thoroughly Christian. The term Unitarian, as any sectarian term, is objectionable to me, but in whatever profession of Cristianity I find its *real true spirit* I am elevated and aided by the conviction that I have, with the disciples of Christ, a genuine sympathy and a firm faith in and love of Him and His doctrines.”

And so with books, visits from and to old friends, educating his children, and all the time taking a keen interest in passing affairs, the last decade of the great actor’s life passed quietly and peacefully away. In these days of gigantic exhibitions it is of interest to quote one further extract from his diary describing a visit to the International Exhibition of 1862, during one of his rare visits to London :—

“ 7th October, 1862.—Went in a cab to the International Exhibition. My sensations were so varied, so complicated, that I have difficulty in recalling and describing them to myself. The exterior, being of parts and never presenting a whole, makes little or no impression. The tide of persons of all grades flowing up in unbroken streams to the greater entrance interested me. We ourselves are, after all, the subject that most touches us. At the pay place there was nothing to remark but the uncivil, churlish tone of the turnstile-keeper. The effect on entering is simply bewildering. The impossibility of *seeing* it all at once comes as a conviction to us, and there is nothing but to wander on, glancing at the objects as you pass, perhaps stopping at some which may have an individual interest for you, but making up your mind to a long and fatiguing walk through the world’s wonders of natural production, human art and science. The glass, china, enamel painting and Wedgwood ware were

marvellously beautiful ; the carriages were fashioned with rare subservience to luxury. I walked through the picture gallery, but to *see* the pictures was out of the question. Many old acquaintances, however, I met with, and some foreign ones I had a glimpse of which I was glad to have, even thus hastily. The crowd interested me greatly. The world of feeling and of thought—of what was it made up?—greatly engaged me. The little crowing of some infants in such a place was a pleasing sound to me. The *coup d'œil* from the gallery above the main entrance was very striking, and might have made a Xerxes weep in thinking of the destinies before him. The conveniences for rest, refreshment, and all needful accommodation seemed to me excellent ; the incivility of manners of doorkeepers, policemen, etc., most noticeable. I looked with peculiar interest at the specimens from Ceylon* and from Tasmania, among which were dear Louisa Meredith's† drawings of the various flowers, etc. Having spent about two hours and a half there I returned, for all that could be really gained in such a transient view might be had even in less time. Still it is a wonderful thing ; a wonderful evidence of the world's civilization, and I am thankful for having seen it."

In 1869 my father suffered a severe blow in the death of my eldest half-sister on her way back from Madeira, whither she had gone in the vain hope of relief from consumption, and the following year the sudden death of his old and tried friend Charles Dickens, to whom he was devotedly attached, brought about a breakdown in health from which he never fully recovered.

From that time he gradually descended the last steps of his life's journey, and on the 27th April, 1873, passed peacefully away in his eighty-first year, retaining consciousness to the last. Almost up to the very end he enjoyed being read to by my mother for many hours at a time, and, when owing to fatigue she had to desist, he would find solace in the stores of his still wonderful

* Where his eldest son was in the Civil Service.

† A cousin of my father's.

memory. On one occasion, having been left alone longer than usual, my mother asked him how the time had been spent. He replied that he had been reading "Hamlet." Knowing that he could not read, she asked him if he could remember the whole of the play. His answer was: "Yes, every word, every pause; and the very pauses have eloquence."

It has been a lifelong regret that my late arrival in the world deprived me of the privilege of being present at my father's later triumphs on the stage, or even attending his readings to the family. Only the remembrance of the kindly old gentleman remains to me, always ready with some bit of fun, and never irritable or out of temper with the small boy who certainly at times must have tried his patience. He showed his attitude towards me in his diary for 1865: "Nevil was very naughty, crying in a most perverse manner because his mother went out of the room. I could not bear to punish him, but his mother gave him a sharp discipline. I am too old, and cannot bear to leave on his mind the remembrance of me as his executioner."

At the time of my father's death I was at school in South Devon, and returned home to attend the funeral. It was one of those morbid Victorian ceremonials—a heavy luncheon at the Great Western Hotel, Paddington, at which many of his old friends were present, hats swathed in black scarves, and black gloves served out to guests on arrival.

The service at Kensal Green was beautifully read by the Rev. James Fleming—later Canon of York Cathedral, and a pupil in elocation of my father—the address ending with Mrs. Bardauld's moving lines:—

Life! we've long been together
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;
Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not "Good night," but in some brighter clime
Bid me "Good morning."

Thus the great actor was laid to rest in the family vault among those he loved so well, and in him passed the only survivor of that famous galaxy of artists, Sarah Siddons, the Kembles, Edmund Kean, and Charles Young, "who made a nation purer through their art."

CHAPTER II.

MY school career, which was chiefly remarkable for getting into constant scrapes and doing the least possible amount of work, commenced at the Tavistock Grammar School, of which the head master, the Rev. E. Spencer, was my mother's brother, and where I remained until I was fourteen, when I moved on to Marlborough, much against my own inclination, as I had always looked forward to entering Cheltenham College, where my half-brother had been educated and where I had many friends. In January, 1878, however, I managed to pick up a severe attack of inflammation of the lungs, and persuaded my mother to enter me for Cheltenham at the summer term of that year.

I look back upon my life at Cheltenham with real pleasure. I did practically no work, shot all the summer, and played football in the winter, with mild rackets and fives thrown in. In due course I became captain of the Shooting VIII, and consequently a prefect, and life was very pleasant. In 1880 I took an eight to Wimbledon which tied with Eton for the Ashburton Shield. We had already tied and had one shot to go, to be fired by the steadiest and most phlegmatic member of the team. He put a bull's-eye on the wrong target! The following year the same boy captained the Cheltenham College team that won the shield, and I never felt happier than when I shook him by the hand that day, having come over from Sandhurst to watch the match.

The good shooting of the Cheltenham boys during those years I attribute entirely to the fact that it was compulsory for them to shoot on the back instead of in the prone position, in which it was impossible for the ordinary boy to hold a heavy long Snider rifle steady, especially in a wind. I have often heard it argued that the back position was only used by "pot-hunters," and was useless

as training for the Army. That is no doubt correct as regards grown men engaged in military training, but undeveloped boys derived far greater encouragement from a position in which they could handle their rifle with comfort and confidence, perfect the training of their hand and eye, and in course of time and development become equally expert in any position.

The original idea as regards my future was that I should go to the University, but the abysmal position I invariably occupied—through pure laziness, not stupidity, I hope—so far as lessons were concerned made the outlook anything but promising. In the spring of 1880 it was decided that I should go up for Sandhurst. Again luck stood by me. The marking for the examination in those days did not necessitate qualification in each of a certain number of subjects, and by chance the English literature paper, which was then heavily marked, consisted mainly of matter that had been drilled into me in my childhood. Old soldiers will remember the formula after a judging distance practice: "Private Jones four, remainder nothing." So it was, to all intents and purposes, with my papers in this examination: "English literature nearly full marks, remainder nothing," and I scraped in, to everybody's astonishment, three or four from the bottom of the list.

Possibly the shock of this unexpected achievement had the effect of suddenly developing the latent capacity for solid work which was within me, for from that moment I settled down seriously to make up for what I had lost through ten years' pleasant idleness, and succeeded in passing out a year later about the same number of places from the top as I had passed in from the bottom.

On the 22nd October, 1881, our batch of cadets was gazetted, and I found myself a Gordon Highlander and posted to the 1st battalion, then at Malta. This was the first big gazette of cadets to the Army as reorganized in July, 1881, when Territorial and other designations were substituted for the



THE PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE, CHELTENHAM COLLEGE
1880

	Macready		Haynes
Forrest		Sim	Close

old numbers, and the whole of the infantry, with the exception of the King's Royal Rifles, Rifle Brigade, and Cameron Highlanders, was linked up into two-battalion regiments. The wisdom of the course then taken by the authorities has been questioned and debated even up to the present day, and at the time caused a good deal of ill-feeling between battalions, which even to-day has not altogether died out. At the time the change was made there might well have been cause for bitterness among officers and men who had come to look on their unit as their permanent home, but that the feeling should be continued by those who joined the Army subsequent to the change *has always struck me as an evidence of small-minded absurdity.*

In due course, with three other newly gazetted brother officers, I embarked for Malta on H.M.S. "Jumna," one of the old Indian troopers. Soldiers of to-day may thank their good fortune that they now travel in hired transports, and not in the old atrocities of the last years of the nineteenth century. At Malta my companions and myself found ourselves the only ones in the battalion completely fitted out in Highland kit, as the rest, both officers and men, were in a state of transition from tunics and red-striped trousers to doublets and kilts. The battalion paraded for the first time in Highland kit on 18th June, 1881.

After the novelty of the life had worn off, and one was dismissed recruits' drill on the barrack-square, life at Malta was not a thrilling experience, although in the winter it was gay enough. I remember I was the cause of some amusement on the occasion of a big guest night when we entertained the Port Admiral and his Staff. Our mess sergeant was one of the old type who had lived his life in the regiment, and looked upon himself as the guide, philosopher and friend of all young officers. After dinner, when the cigars and cigarettes were brought round, I took a cigar and asked the waiter if it was mild. In a stage whisper, which could be heard all down the table, the mess sergeant, who was following

the waiter, thus admonished me : " If you've never smoked before, sir, try a cigarette ! " It was some time before this was forgotten.

The first time I commanded the Main Guard " on my own " I had an adventure which might have had an unpleasant result. A number of European refugees from Egypt had been interned on the quarantine island for fear of their spreading cholera, and so strict were the precautions that no priest was allowed to go to the lazaretto to conduct Mass. A small chapel was therefore built on the wall on the other side of the harbour, facing the lazaretto, where Mass could be celebrated and the people in quarantine across the water participate. When the chapel was finished a Cardinal came from Rome to consecrate it, a great event for the Maltese. The orders for the Main Guard laid down that the guard would turn out to the Archbishop of Malta, who had, and I presume still has, the standing of a major-general in the Army, so far as military compliments are concerned. The square between the guard-room and the palace was packed with people all eager to see and do honour to the Cardinal. The Archbishop's carriage came along and he received the salute of the guard, which was duly " turned in " after he had passed.

A little later the Cardinal passed along. I had no orders in regard to him, and therefore was enjoying the spectacle from the guard-room balcony. Suddenly someone in the crowd turned towards the guard-house, saw that the guard had not turned out, and shouted, " Turn out the guard ! " In a few moments the whole crowd took up the cry, and, turning towards the guard-house, began to surge towards it. Happily the people were so closely packed together that individual action was impossible. At first I was rather amused, but after a time realized that some fanatical spirits might try and rush the doors, in which case there would be trouble. I went down and posted men with fixed bayonets at each of the doors, with orders to use their bayonets

if necessary, but not to fire without my order. I then returned to the balcony to get a better view, and saw a palace official forcing his way through the crowd. He got through at last, very red in the face, and prepared to fall heavily upon unfortunate me, asking with various expletives, which I am sure would have shocked the Cardinal, why I had not carried out my orders. I told him that that was exactly what I had done. He then asked me why I had not carried out the order to turn the guard out to the Cardinal. Very humbly I told him for the very best of reasons: I had not got it. The fact was the order had been given to one of the extra A.D.C.'s—he happened to be a brother officer and has long since passed away—who had forgotten all about it. So the guard was turned out, and presented arms, though the Cardinal was well out of sight, and everybody was happy again. Had a bayonet found its way into an intruding Maltese I fancy I should have ended my military career on "political grounds."

During the months of June and July, 1882, the garrison of Malta was all agog over the situation in Egypt, the sudden movements of men-o'-war and troops accentuating the excitement. One of the many rumours that found credence in the canteen was that an Egyptian warship had gone to Ireland to protect Egyptian interests, and that Irishmen were being employed to organize and train the Egyptian troops! The cause of the yarn no doubt was the Phoenix Park murders, which had just shocked the world.

On 9th July, 1882, orders were received for the battalion to hold itself in readiness to embark at a moment's notice, and on 2nd August we embarked on H.M.S. "Euphrates," disembarking at Alexandria five days later.

Except for comparatively small expeditions outside India, the Egyptian campaign of 1882 was the first war in which the British Army in large numbers had been engaged since the Crimea, and as a consequence ideas in regard to comfort and health were rudimentary, to say the least. In the 1st Gordons there was only one

man—the pipe-major—who had seen active service, with the result that we started, so far as the officers were concerned, in a kit little less than ridiculous. It consisted of a white helmet, red serge jacket with gold lace collar and cuffs, white cross-belt, kilt, sporran and white gaiters. When we reached Alexandria the helmets, belts, and gaiters were discoloured in tea, and very soon we set about doing what we could to imitate the Sam Browne belts worn by the Guards and other troops from England. My own effort in that line was two of the men's bed-straps and a bayonet frog. It was not beautiful or comfortable, but was better than the cross-belt.

Another result of inexperience on the part of the Colonel was an order for officers to feed with their companies instead of having a properly organized mess. I am aware that the cry is often raised that officers should share and share alike with their men, and no one is more ready to do so than the regimental officer, but except on emergencies it is not a sound maxim. In time of peace there is a considerable difference between the diet of officers and men, or rather there used to be in the early 'eighties, before army cooking was brought to its present pitch of excellence, or field-kitchens were invented, and to condemn an officer suddenly to change his whole scheme of diet at a time when his physical forces are subjected to constant and severe strain generally results in a breakdown. This certainly was the case with us in 1882. Before the end of the short campaign, lasting some six weeks, almost every officer in the battalion was down with some more or less serious stomach complaint.

On our arrival in Egypt we were joined by a draft of officers and men from the 2nd battalion which had seen service in Afghanistan and Natal, who helped greatly to supply the experience that can only be learnt in the field. By the time we arrived at Alexandria the town had been more or less cleaned up, but the effects of the bombardment were visible everywhere, especially in the Place

Mehemet Ali and surrounding streets, where many of the largest naval shells were lying about unexploded. Being the first Highland regiment to arrive, our appearance caused some excitement among the inhabitants, who, I think, imagined that we were akin to Albanians, of whom a certain number were to be seen dressed in spotlessly white kilt-like garments. The ten days after disembarking were spent in loading and unloading stores, and in finding guards in and around the town.

On the 18th August the battalion was sent off to Ramleh, where the Cameron Highlanders joined us the next day, and where we experienced the excitement of having nothing between us and the enemy's lines. On the 20th August we enjoyed our baptism of fire : the enemy had some big guns in the Kafr Dawar entrenchments along the fresh-water canal, which our artillery were anxious to locate. So about 4 p.m. the Camerons and ourselves were moved out on to the dry bed of Lake Aboukir, and marched in double company columns of half-battalions slowly towards the enemy's lines, the Berkshire Regiment being under the canal bank on our right. After we had gone some distance up went a column of white smoke, and a 6½-inch Krupp shell came moaning over us. Altogether some seventeen shells were fired at us, but nobody was hurt. One shell, to our amusement, fell among the mules and special war correspondents away in the rear, and stampeded them. I do not know why it is, but I have noticed that when " our special correspondent " gets into difficulties there is invariably some amusement among soldiers, good fellows though they may know the O.S.C. to be. Perhaps it is the pushfulness of the type, and the fact that accounts of incidents as published do not always tally with what the soldier has seen with his own eyes. We got back to camp about 7 p.m., very pleased with ourselves and with no casualties.

During our stay at Alexandria dysentery and fever began to harass officers and men, and one of our best officers, Captain

Baynes, was carried off by a sharp attack of the former malady. The medical arrangements on this campaign were far from what they should have been, as I experienced myself later on. Poor Baynes was on board the "Tamar," which had been turned into a hospital ship of sorts, but which, instead of being moored in some quiet place in the harbour, was tied up alongside a jetty, where the water was filthy and the noise continuous, to say nothing of the heat in the cabins from want of air. I remember the Colonel telling our medical officer that Baynes had been murdered by the disgraceful arrangements, or rather want of arrangements.

On 30th August the Highland Brigade (Black Watch, Highland Light Infantry, Gordons, and Camerons), under Major-General Sir Archibald Alison,* embarked for Ismailia. We found ourselves on board R.M.S. "Iberia," of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, with Sir A. Alison and the Brigade Staff. Never shall I forget the comfort of that ship, which seemed to us like a floating palace, and the joy of sheets, baths and decent food.

On 2nd September we entered Lake Timzah, and anchored among the crowd of transports and ships of war that filled the lake. It was a wonderful sight, especially at night, under the clear Egyptian stars, with the orderly lines of lighted ships, and the coloured canal beacons. After our late experience in the Great War, it is difficult to keep a true perspective of former warlike expeditions, but I remember watching that scene from the ship, and dwelling with pride on the thought that of all countries in Europe none but Britain could in the space of time have concentrated from far and wide a force of ships and men such as lay around us.

For six days we remained on board ship, going ashore daily for fatigue work, shifting stores, railway material, guns, animals,

* General Sir Archibald Alison, Bt., G.C.B. (1826-1907). Served in the Crimea and Indian Munity, losing his left arm at the Relief of Lucknow

and the thousand-and-one things required by an army advancing into a hostile country. At last the word came to move forward, and on the 9th September we disembarked, and at 3 p.m. started on our march into the desert with the other three battalions of the Highland Brigade. The march was hot and tiring, the sand under foot being either very soft, into which we sank up to our ankles, or hard and gravelly, cut up by horses and transport. During the march we missed the track, and did not arrive at El Magfar till 10-30 p.m. A good many men of the battalion fell out, being rather soft after a week on board ship, but all rejoined during the night.

The next day, at 5 a.m., we moved on a few miles, lying in the sun all day till 4 p.m., when we marched another four hours to a place called Rameses. It was very hot and trying to the men, one of whom fell dead from the heat. Another march of about four hours on the following day brought the brigade to Kassassin, where the bulk of the striking force was collected. That night my company was on outpost duty, and about 4 a.m. Sir Garnet Wolseley and his staff rode through our pickets towards the cavalry vedettes out in front.

At 5 p.m. the next day, 12th September, the Colonel sent for all the officers, and told us that the Egyptian position at Tel-el-Kebir would be stormed at daybreak, the men to be warned that no firing was to take place until they were over the entrenchments. At 6 p.m. camp was struck, the tents, etc., piled by the railway track, and two hours later the brigade moved off in the dark in column to the rendezvous at a spot called "Nine-Gun Hill," which was reached about 10-30 p.m. At this point the brigade took up the formation in which the attack was to be carried out, viz., line of half-battalions at double company distance, in the following order :—

HIGHLAND LIGHT
INFANTRY.

C A M E R O N S . G O R D O N S . B L A C K W A T C H .

This having been done to the satisfaction of the Brigadier and Staff, arms were piled and we lay down to rest. It was pitch dark save for the wonderful starlit dome that is seen to such perfection in the desert ; now and again an odd shot was heard away on our right, but I fancy most of us got a couple of hours' comfortable sleep in the soft sand, untroubled except by the thought that Arabi and his army would not await the attack.

At 1-15 a.m. we silently got under arms, a tot of rum being served out all round, which was relished by the men, as the usual rum ration had been stopped by Sir Garnet Wolseley's orders during the earlier part of the campaign. When all was ready we started slowly forward, the pace being more like the slow march of a funeral parade than anything else. No smoking or talking was allowed. My attention as company guide was concentrated on keeping touch right and left, and endeavouring in the darkness to see if the company was keeping its line. After being on the move for about two hours a whispered order came down the ranks to sit down. Peering into the darkness, I saw a body of men moving slowly across at right angles to our front a few yards ahead. No one knew what had happened.

Afterwards, it appeared that in the dark the flanks had gradually wheeled inwards, and were in fact actually moving on each other. If the mistake had not been discovered there would have been something akin to disaster, for in the dark, with nerves highly strung, it is more than probable that, although rifles were unloaded, shots would have been fired, and the alarm given to the enemy, even if nothing more serious had occurred. If firing had suddenly broken out of the darkness just in front, instinct and inclination would have almost compelled us to have taken part either with the bayonet or bullet. The fact that the troops regained their formation with scarcely a sound was not only a marvellous stroke of luck for the Commander-in-Chief, but yet another evidence of the wonderful discipline and steadiness of

British troops. To this day I remember the tense excitement of the moment, as we watched the shadowy line of figures moving slowly and silently close across our front, and wondered who they could be and where they had sprung from.

As soon as this mishap had been put right, the lines again started on their slow, silent march. All that could be heard was the dull, sand-muffled tramp, an occasionally hoarsely whispered command by some officer or N.C.O., and now and again a smothered oath and rattle of accoutrements as a man stumbled over a rock or into a scrub bush. It was nearing 5 a.m. when I looked back and saw the sky away in the east begin to lighten, though nothing could yet be seen in our front but the shadowy outline of the horizon. Suddenly a couple of shots were fired away on the right, directly followed by a burst of rifle fire in our immediate front. The General's bugler sounded the "Advance," the troops fixed bayonets, and with a cheer raced towards the flashes of the enemy's rifles that now stretched away right and left along our front. Into the deep ditch we tumbled pell-mell, and up the steep slope we scrambled as fast as the soft shifting sand would admit, pushing, pulling, cursing, cheering till we reached the top and jumped into a mingled, seething mass of red-coated Highlanders stabbing and hacking Arabi's white-garbed soldiers.

Up to this time not a shot had been fired by our men, but almost at the moment we cleared the first line the dawn rose out of the east, and one could dimly make out our surroundings. The Egyptian artillery had opened fire from several redoubts in their front line and from supporting works in their rear, especially from a redoubt on some rising ground directly in front of us. Heavy, but happily inaccurate, rifle fire was coming from every trench of the elaborate system of defence, so that from where we found ourselves, between two of the front line redoubts, it looked as if we were within a circle of fire with no well-defined objective. Companies and even battalions were to some extent mixed up,

and it was impossible to get any orders or get the men into any kind of formation. The Egyptians who had been holding the entrenchment we had stormed had all been disposed of, and as fire was coming from another trench in our immediate front we automatically surged over it.

It was there that I caught sight of our gallant one-armed Commander—Sir Archibald Alison—leading straight up the rising ground towards the redoubt which crowned it. To use our rifles would have endangered our own troops without doing the enemy much harm, and so any attempt by men to load was stopped, and they were ordered to get forward to the redoubt at the top of the rise. I well remember one old soldier—he had five good-conduct badges, and had been employed, I think, in the shoemaker's shop—whom I caught slipping a cartridge into his Martini. When I checked him, and told him to take it out, he, on the strength of the fact no doubt that he was an old soldier and I a young one, began a long dissertation on the effect of high-angle fire, explaining that if he fired his rifle straight up in the air the bullet would fall on an Egyptian's head, and so on! I told him to shut up and come along with some other men by a communicating trench which led up to the redoubt on the hill. Of course, the old boy was a bit dazed, and small blame to him, but the incident, apart from its humorous side, made an impression on me, and possibly was the germ which in after years developed into an habitual practice to make use of younger men in preference to older ones, whether as N.C.O.'s in my company, or as Staff officers when I reached a position to have a say in the selection of my subordinates.

By the time we reached the redoubt on the hill day had broken, and we had a view over the whole field. The resistance at the two redoubts in the front line attacked by the Highland Light Infantry and Black Watch had ceased, and by the position the Highland Brigade then held the retreat of the enemy's centre and left was cut off from the railway and canal. The firing in our part of the

field had quite died down, and as we sat and rested on the hill we perceived the white coats streaming from the trenches away up to the north almost as far as one could see, though some firing still continued from that part of the line, and the 1st British Division could be discerned extending and advancing still at a considerable distance from the forward trenches. It was just at this moment that a battery of horse artillery came tearing up the hill at full gallop, and, unlimbering close to where we were, opened fire on the enemy making for the bridge over the canal. As the battery dashed by we all cheered and shouted ourselves hoarse, for we realized that the enemy were now about to get their *coup de grâce*. Just about the same time, away across the canal to the south, we could see the Indian cavalry moving rapidly among the palm trees on the same errand, to cut off the enemy's retreat. Thus ended the last battle fought by the British Army in the time-honoured red coats.

Sir Garnet Wolseley's despatches, when published, caused a good deal of feeling among the officers and men of the 2nd Division, which had been composed of the Highland Brigade and a brigade made up of a battalion of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and of the King's Royal Rifles. As I have said earlier, as we sat on the redoubt in rear of the lines assaulted by the 2nd Division, we watched the enemy away to the north evacuating their lines as fast as they could run in front of the 1st Division, which was even then at some distance from the front trenches. At the time considerable controversy took place, and our Divisional General—Sir Edward Hamley—published in *The Nineteenth Century Magazine* of November, 1882, an account of the fight which, from what we actually saw, was absolutely accurate. The whole occurrence was unfortunate, for it certainly gave grounds for the idea among junior officers and men that Sir Garnet Wolseley had a "down" on Highlanders, which doubtless had no foundation in fact; but it was a pity that any excuse for such an impression should have existed.

When it was evident that the enemy were routed the Gordons formed up near the redoubt, and moved down to the bridge over the canal, the water of which was contaminated with every kind of filth and the dead bodies of men and animals. Although orders were given not to drink the water, many men were unable to resist the torment of thirst, and without doubt laid in the seeds of future disease. Some of us were lucky enough to get handfuls of grapes, with which many of the camels lying about were laden. We spent an uncomfortable day in railway trucks, and under any shelter that could be found from the sun, and at 5 p.m. the brigade moved on another five or six miles towards Zagazig, which was reached the next evening after a comparatively pleasant march through cultivated land interspersed with irrigation canals.

On 15th September the brigade went to Benha by train, and there split up, the Black Watch going to Belbeis, the Highland Light Infantry and Camerons to Cairo. Early on 17th September Sir Archibald Alison took the Gordons by train to Tantah, where an incident occurred which, almost unnoticed at the time, reflected great kudos on the nerve and resource of our Brigadier. In and about Tantah was a large force of Egyptian cavalry, artillery, and infantry, some 3,000 in all. Our battalion detrained and waited at the station, while Sir Archibald, with the Staff and twelve men, went into the town, where in an open space he found himself confronted by a large number of the enemy just preparing to "fall in." He made a speech to them, explaining that a large force of British were at the station, and in the end "bounced" them into surrendering.

Word was sent to the station to march down three companies. On arrival we formed three sides of a square in front of the guns, and took the surrender of 24 Krupp guns and some 3,000 stand of arms, the men being allowed to go about their business as soon as they had given up their arms. Some Egyptian police who were present were most energetic on our behalf, belabouring

the crowd of onlookers with their "nabouts," and generally behaving as if they were the most loyal subjects of our Gracious Queen!

This place Tantah was notorious as a hotbed of fanaticism, a massacre of Europeans having taken place there after the bombardment of Alexandria. If the Egyptian troops had shown fight and been well led our weak battalion would have had its work cut out in the face of superior numbers and guns, of which latter, of course, we had none.

We remained at Tantah till 28th September. It was a most villainous place, and all ranks began to suffer from every kind of disease—dysentery, enteric and malaria fevers, and ophthalmia—so we were thankful to get our orders to go to Cairo, which was reached on the evening of the 28th, only to find that we could not get into the station, which was on fire, probably the work of incendiaries. Several ammunition trains were in the sidings, and we spent the night endeavouring to get the fire under, and shifting trucks laden with explosives. In the darkness the glare of the flames, accentuated by occasional explosions, had a weird and grand effect. Natives found by our patrols suspiciously creeping about among the trains had but short shrift, being bayoneted and tossed into the burning debris. The commissariat arrangements were woefully deficient, no food reaching us during the whole of the following day, till we got to our camp at Gezireh late in the evening. From this time the battalion settled down to more or less peace conditions, our leisure time being spent in exploring Cairo, then a very different and more interesting city than it is to-day.

My first view of His Highness the Khedive, Tewfik Pasha, occurred under circumstances not perhaps so dignified as I would have wished. Returning from Cairo on a donkey in full war-paint, my kilt spread over the animal's hindquarters, which is necessary for comfort when taking riding exercise in the garb of

Old Gaul, I saw a carriage with outriders approaching, and recognized the Khedive. I saluted with all the dignity which circumstances permitted, and received a very gracious salute and inclination of the august head in return.

Life might have been quite pleasant but for the ravages of disease among officers and men, and on the 8th October I succumbed to malaria, and was sent to the hospital in the citadel. It was in a building which had been the harem, and the windows not being made to open were broken out. Hot as the sun was during the daytime, at night the wind of the desert was more than cool, and many a case was aggravated by this culpable want of prevision. In my own case I caught a bad chill, which necessitated long sick-leave that might well have been avoided.

Looking back to those days, and bearing in mind the public excitement over medical arrangements during the South African War, and in Mesopotamia during the Great War, it has often struck me that the public must have been more apathetic in the early 'eighties than they were later. There were twenty-six officers in our so-called ward, no nurses of course, only a few orderlies who were far too busy or casual to give adequate attention. If an officer was helpless, his servant used to sleep on the floor between his bed and the next one. The last comers were put into the beds under the open windows, and if they survived were moved into other beds as vacancies occurred. There were no sheets or linen of any kind, although in the town there must have been more than enough to satisfy requirements, and the food, which had no pretension to be hospital diet, was cooked in the courtyard by a native cook ; yet there must have been kitchen-ranges by the hundred for the asking, or taking, in Cairo.

I remember a major of some regiment who was able to get about and have his breakfast at a table, used every morning to look round the ward, and come out with some such remark as : "Hullo ! So-and-so has died in the night." It did not tend to cheer one.

Sir Garnet Wolseley visited the place fairly often, and had a kindly word for all of us, but I have never understood why the conditions were not improved. Perhaps they were after I left. The experience, however, was good for anyone who might in the future be in the smallest degree responsible for medical arrangements on active service.

Towards the end of October I was sent with other invalids down the Nile to the hospital ship "Carthage," lying in Alexandria harbour. Here conditions were very different, and every comfort then known, including nursing sisters, was available. However, I was not quite out of the wood, for on 28th October I was carried on to "The Egyptian Monarch," a ship that had been a horse or mule transport and was taken up for invalids. That voyage to this day is a nightmare to me. There were no medical comforts or suitable food, the ship was very lively in a sea, and we had continual bad weather after leaving Gibraltar. A considerable number of men died before we arrived at Portsmouth, but I heard afterwards that retribution had overtaken those responsible for what can only be described as culpable negligence to provide the most elementary comforts for the sick and wounded. In Alexandria harbour were lying many of the best and most comfortable ships then afloat, but from experience since acquired I imagine that for motives of economy the authorities responsible were pressed to close the contracts with the surplus horse transports, and were not strong enough to resist civilian pressure—an oft-repeated story.

Towards the end of March, 1883, on expiration of sick-leave, I rejoined the regiment at the Citadel, Cairo, where it had moved into permanent quarters. The Bijou Palace, once the abode of Mehemet Ali, had been handed over to us for an officers' mess, and excellent quarters it made, the little garden in front, with its shade and fountain, affording a welcome relief from the glare of the Egyptian sun. Hanging over the wall was a small summer

house from which a most gorgeous view, especially as the sun was setting, unfolded itself right over the city and away to the Pyramids of Gizeh, all bathed in that soft amber light peculiar to the land of the Pharaohs. A few yards along the wall was the spot over which, tradition says, the last of the Mamelukes jumped his horse and alone escaped the massacre of his caste by Mehemet Ali.

Life in Cairo was, from a military standpoint, by no means strenuous. Beyond the usual regimental duties and very occasional field days, our time was spent in amusing ourselves, about which there was no difficulty. The Egyptian Army was just bursting out of its chrysalis, and British officers attached thereto were a joy to behold in their new blue or white uniforms, finished off with the longest of long spurs. In great contrast was the appearance of the British troops. The War Office, having come to the conclusion that red uniform was obsolete for campaigning, was evidently exercised to find a substitute, and we accordingly found ourselves clothed in jackets of a hairy grey mixture which, when washed, became any colour from light blue to faint pink. The appearance of the battalion on parade was beyond description, and an additional disadvantage was that this unsoldierly looking material was much warmer than the old red "frock."

Towards the middle of July of that year Egypt was swept with a severe epidemic of cholera. In Cairo it was particularly bad, at one time a thousand a day being reported as struck down. All the troops were moved out of the town, either to the Suez Canal or to the heights above Cairo, except the Gordons, who remained in the Citadel. It was not pleasant, as for a fortnight no one was allowed into the town; but with daily cricket matches in the afternoon, and "sing songs" and theatricals at night, the men were kept busy and amused, and the battalion only lost about seventeen of all ranks from the disease.

Happily, one of our officers, George Downman, who afterwards fell at Magersfontein in command of the 1st battalion, was

a first-rate amateur actor and organizer of theatrical entertainments. Permission was obtained to use the old Hall of Justice behind the Bijou Palace. After considerable difficulty the doors, which had been shut for years, were opened, and two of our people in flannels went inside, emerging a few minutes later with their trousers a heaving mass of fleas. The floor of the building was several inches deep with the dust of ages, the main component of which was the Egyptian flea. It did not take long to clean out and lime-wash the place, get a stage rigged up, and convert a long range of what had been cells behind the stage into comfortable dressing-rooms.

As long as the regiment remained in Cairo this theatre provided excellent amusement and employment for both officers and men, and at least one episode which occurred the following year in connection with it had its amusing side. Captain Speedy, the well-known Abyssinian traveller and at one time guardian of King Theodore's son, was spending the season in Cairo, and people were anxious that he should give a lecture on his experiences in Abyssinia. So it was arranged that it should take place in our theatre, with some singing between the three parts. I was told off to sing between the first and second parts, and Private Bishop, our show low comedian, between the second and third. All Cairo was invited; the auditorium was packed, the men being crowded up on the seats at the back of the hall. All went well to the end of the second part, when the low comedian—and a very good one he was—took the boards. He came on dressed up in a mess waiter's livery, and led off with a song called "When Noah Hung out in the Ark." There was no harm in the song, and except for a more vigorous exercise of their fans by the ladies in front, the audience seemed undisturbed. Bishop was, however, a great favourite with the men, who from the back clamoured for an encore, and he duly came on again and sang a song about a man in the Salvation Army who was persecuted by the amorous attentions

of a female captain of the same persuasion. Towards the end of this effort several ladies found the atmosphere close, and with their attendant swains made a move to the court outside to enjoy the beauties of the Egyptian stars. I had crawled into the prompt box, whence I had a good view of the audience. The Colonel's face was a study, he, poor man, having no sense of humour, and a holy fear of generals and other superior military lights, many of whom were in the theatre.

The worst was yet to come. The "boxes, stalls, and circle," otherwise the beauty and fashion, who were left in the front rows, applauded feebly, hoping that now Captain Speedy would return and raise the tone of the proceedings. The men at the back, however, evidently preferred Bishop to Speedy, and clapped, shouted, and stamped until after several ineffectual bows the music struck up and the low comedian obliged once more, this time with a very barrack-room ballad, under the name of "Those Old Fatigue Trews." Outside a barrack-room it is perhaps best left to the imagination; but, shortly, the song described the life of a kilt, from birth to destruction. The Colonel got purple in the face, the remaining ladies went out to look at the stars, and Bishop was told to go and lose himself in the canteen.

Eventually Captain Speedy finished his lecture, which was more than interesting, and the Society portion of the audience were carried off to the mess to a champagne supper and a dance, after which everybody, except the Colonel, felt better. It was some weeks, however, before one could with impunity ask any of the fair sex in Cairo if they had been to Captain Speedy's lecture at the Citadel!

Poor Downman was for orderly room the next day, he being "sole lessee and manager," and got told off badly by the Colonel, the most heinous part of his offence, it turned out, being the appearance of Bishop in mess waiter's clothes.

Very happy times we had in that old "fit up," and some really

creditable performances, intermingled with hair-breadth escapes from disaster, such as when the " Bob Brierly " in the " Ticket-of-Leave Man " appeared at the dress rehearsal blind drunk, and had to be locked up in one of the cell dressing-rooms till the next evening, when, after a cup of weak tea, he was let out to dress and make up for the first performance.

But to return to the cholera. As it lessened we were allowed out of barracks into certain parts of the town, and a very dismal, deserted place it was. One grimly amusing sight constantly met one's eyes when riding along the outskirts of the town. The authorities had established various centres to which persons overtaken with cholera were to be brought, and a reward of two piastres given to any native bringing in a patient. Riding along a deserted road, one would see an Arab countryman coming along with dates or some other produce for sale, not a soul besides in sight. He would sit under a tree to rest, and perhaps roll a cigarette. No sooner had he sat down than from apparently nowhere half a dozen or more donkey-boys would appear, galloping their donkeys up to the wretched man, fight over him, and finally the whole shouting, screaming crowd would forcibly carry him off to one of the cholera centres, where a donkey-boy received his two piastres and the man probably died of cholera from sheer fright. The epidemic, if sharp, was, however, short, and by the middle of September, 1883, leave was reopened, and I was lucky enough to get three months'.

During the early months of 1884 Cairo was full of alarms and excursions owing to the activities of the Mahdi and Osman Digna in the Soudan. February saw the ill-fated attempt by that fine soldier Valentine Baker, with some 4,000 untrained cowed Egyptians, to attack Osman Digna at Sinkat, and the annihilation of his force, he himself being severely wounded. In Cairo it had been the universal opinion when the expedition started that only disaster could result.

Directly the news reached Cairo steps were taken to despatch a force of British troops to avenge the defeat, and rescue the Egyptian garrisons locked up in Tokah and other places. The Gordons were among the troops detailed for the expedition, and it was my fate to suffer a soldier's Gethsemane, being selected to remain in Cairo with the band and details, on the ground that I was the senior subaltern not in command of a company. To this hour it hurts to recall the heartache of those days, and in particular the agony of watching my comrades march off to entrain while maintaining an appearance of philosophical cheerfulness. The battles of El Teb and Tamai were fought and won, and the battalion returned to Cairo early in April, 1884.

CHAPTER III.

IN the summer of 1884 I was offered and accepted, in spite of some opposition on the part of my commanding officer, the billet of Staff-Lieutenant of Military Police in Egypt. Colonel the Hon. Sir James Dormer, then the Chief of the Staff in Egypt, was very kind about it, and early in July I took up my duties in that capacity at Alexandria. In those days the Military Police, mounted and foot, were in fact, if not officially, responsible for the policing of Cairo and Alexandria, the reorganization of the Egyptian police being far from complete, and the rank and file of that force inspiring little confidence among the law-abiding portion of the population, or respect among the criminal classes. The Assistant Provost-Marshal and officer commanding the Corps of Military Police was Captain Williams-Freeman—Royal Sussex Regiment—afterwards for many years Chief Constable of Shropshire, and Lieutenant J. Maxwell, of the Black Watch (now General the Right Honourable Sir J. Maxwell, G.C.B.) the Staff Captain. In Cairo the duties were purely those of policing a large garrison town with the increased responsibility of being ready at any moment to cope with a disaffected native population, and in addition the Provost-Marshal had the supervision of the Military Prison at the Citadel.

At Alexandria the work, though on similar lines, differed in many respects from that at Cairo. The population of Alexandria, though smaller than that of Cairo, contained a larger proportion of low-class Greeks, Italians, and Levantines who were always in evidence when trouble was afoot. The sailors of different nationalities were an added source of trouble, as the street brawls between sailors, soldiers, and civilians, which were constantly occurring, often developed into serious rioting and consequent loss

of life due to the readiness of lower-class Europeans to use their knives on the slightest provocation. Just about the time I arrived at Alexandria the agitation for the payment of indemnities for damage done to property in 1882 began to take place. Demonstrations were held in the Place Mehemet Ali, instigated by the French and Italians, and not, so rumour said, altogether discountenanced by Nubar Pasha, the then adviser to the Khedive. These occasions were of course seized upon by every blackguard in the slums in the hope that they might get an opportunity for looting. Troops and police were kept ready, though well out of sight, and while generally the affairs ended in speech-making and shouts of "Vive la France," "Viva Italia," at times they assumed a more serious complexion. The Egyptian police, as I have said, were at that time useless, and the crowd had no fear of the mounted men on their small Arab horses, whereas the mere appearance of a couple of the Military Mounted Police on their English troop horses would clear a street in a few seconds. During one of these indemnity demonstrations I had to send some of my mounted men to rescue Major Marks, the chief of the city police, from the crowd. He was a Swiss, a most worthy little man, but nothing would induce him to get on to a horse, with the result that having got into the middle of a crowd he became lost to the world, and to his own men in particular. In order to keep up the farce of acting only in support of the Egyptian police it was necessary for me to be in touch with him till the moment came for my men to take charge of the proceedings, and therefore it was most important that he should not lose himself before that moment arrived. As time went on these demonstrations of the "Indemnitaires" became more serious, accompanied by incendiarism and loss of life, and we were all glad when eventually the indemnities were paid, and this cause of trouble removed. In the days of which I write the atmosphere of the town was highly inflammable, and any excuse was good enough for the starting of



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a riot, which if not nipped in the bud would lead to serious trouble. I remember at the time when the British Government decided to reduce the garrison, and orders to that effect had been received, serious rioting suddenly broke out, with the result that the orders were cancelled, and I have a shrewd suspicion that the trouble was originated and fomented by money from the pockets of merchants, of all nationalities, who were afraid of what might become of their businesses if the troops were withdrawn. I suppose they looked upon the expenditure as a slight increase on their insurance premiums.

With police duties and the governorship of the Military Prison, I had to combine the duties of Garrison Adjutant, and at times that of acting aide-de-camp to the General. There was plenty to do, but the work was varied and interesting, and in my different capacities I obtained a grounding in every kind of Staff work which stood me in good stead in the years to come.

The Alexandria command when I reported for duty was held by Major-General Earle, who afterwards met a soldier's death at Kirbekan. Full of energy, he knew his own work, and expected others to know and do theirs. Not long after I came on to his staff, I got a "telling-off" for which I have always been grateful. It was hardly surprising if, with less than three years' service, sudden elevation from a regimental subaltern to a "brass hat" should have engendered wind in the head, and in my capacity as Garrison Adjutant I wrote some offensive memoranda to officers commanding units who had held their commissions before I was born. One of them, not troubling to answer my effusion, put it in his pocket and came up to see my General, to complain about the tone of my memo. I was sent for, and General Earle, while taking no notice whatever of the wording or tone of my official effort, asked me what the devil I meant by sending out an undated memo. from his office, adding that if it occurred again I should go back to my regiment. From that day I do not think I have ever

failed to date any document, private or official, and I have always felt grateful to that battalion commander who, by reporting me, first set my pen in search of the art of combining in any document politeness and suavity with the subject matter, however drastic it might of necessity be.

All through the late summer of 1884 preparations for the Nile Expedition were in progress, the bulk of the work falling on the port of Alexandria. The whaler boats, made at great cost in England, began to arrive in September, and were passed on by rail to the South. Before the Nile route for the expedition was definitely decided upon, conferences were held between General Sir F. Stephenson* and old veterans who had served under Ibrahim Pasha when he conquered the Soudan during the reign of Mehemet Ali. It was believed on all sides in Egypt that our Commander-in-Chief had submitted a plan of campaign to rescue Charles Gordon by way of the East Coast, but that it had been negatived by Lord Wolseley. Rumour went on to say that Mr. Gladstone, when accepting Wolseley's view, pointed out that as General Stephenson had submitted an alternative plan and was not sanguine as to the success of the Nile route, especially as regards time, that officer could hardly be ordered to undertake the Nile adventure, the responsibility for which must rest on Lord Wolseley's shoulders. However that may be, there was a good deal of humorous criticism in Egypt over the "Circus," as the expedition was irreverently christened, with its whalers, Canadian Voyageurs, Krumen, and other contributions from all parts of the Empire. The view taken in the country itself was that at any point on the Nile any number of boats could have been collected, which would have been equally, if not more, serviceable for the work, and time, which was the main factor, would have been saved. Of the 300-odd Canadian Voyageurs about a third were

* General Sir Frederick Charles Arthur Stephenson, G.C.B. (1821-1911). Served in the Crimea as Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief. Commanded the Army of Occupation in Egypt, 1882-1888.

men accustomed to the handling of boats. The remainder would seem to have been picked up off the unemployed market without any regard to their capabilities, and great was the trouble the poor British officer had with some of these individuals when at their tender mercies in difficult places up the river. Their advent was not promising. They disembarked on the same day as the Camel Corps—7th October, 1884. I was on duty on the quays, and in my pocket-book noted down some of the names on the Voyageurs' boxes because they struck me as curious. "Patrick Murphy, Limerick" has not somehow much flavour of a canoe on the bosom of a Canadian river. Their officers had little or no control over them, and when after some difficulty they were entrained I was obliged to post a company of the Guards' Camel Corps with fixed bayonets on either side of the train to prevent the Voyageurs from getting out to obtain liquor from the natives through the dock railings. It has always been a mystery to me why it should have been thought necessary to import these men, when hundreds of natives knowing every yard of the river and its cataracts were available. The Krumen were a very different type—hard-working, docile and easily managed, but here again it is difficult to justify their presence when almost unlimited native labour existed in the country. Time was the all-important factor if Khartoum was to be relieved, and it was close on the end of October before all the troops had passed through Alexandria to the front.

The arrival of Lord Wolseley and Lord Northbrook on 6th September passed without incident, though rumours were afloat that the "Indemnitaires" intended to celebrate the occasion by a demonstration to air their grievances. During September Major-General Sir Wilbraham Lennox, V.C.,* a Crimean veteran, came out from home to take over the command at Alexandria. I have rarely met a man with greater aptitude for

* General Sir Wilbraham Oates Lennox, V.C., K.C.B. (1830-1897). Served in the Crimea where he gained the Victoria Cross, and in the Indian Mutiny as Chief Engineer to General Sir Colin Campbell.

probing even the most insignificant details of a command. Nothing escaped him, and departmental officers who were apt to entrench themselves behind the somewhat intricate and technical regulations of their departments had at times a rude awakening when they found that the General's knowledge was equal, if not superior, to their own.

One day the General noticed that an Army Ordnance Corps officer was wearing trousers of a non-regulation pattern. Those were the days when the Ordnance Corps wore on their trousers a broad dark-blue stripe, edged with narrow red stripes. The pattern was shortly afterwards changed to two broad red stripes with a narrow blue one between, and it was this pattern which met and offended the General's eye. The officer was written to and told to conform with the regulation. He noted the order but paid no attention to it. A second and more peremptory order was sent to him, to which he replied that having only one pair of trousers, and uniform being compulsory at all times, he could not send his trousers to be altered. He then got an order to provide himself with a second pair and to parade at the General's office on a certain day with one pair on and one over his arm! The day arrived; it happened to be mail day and every officer of the garrison who could find any pretext for a visit to the Headquarter office put in an appearance. The hero of the trousers arrived immaculately dressed in frock-coat, sword, and one pair of regulation striped continuations on his legs, another over his arm. He disappeared with the senior Staff officer into the General's room, where, as afterwards related, the scene was amusing. The General satisfied himself that the stripes were according to pattern, admonished the officer for not setting an example etc. in his dress, and told him he could go. The officer asked if he might say something, and asked the General if he had seen an Army Order a copy of which he produced. It was an Army Order altering the pattern of the stripes to that which he had been checked for

wearing ! Of course he had known it was coming out and had got a friend to send the copy by mail, so that he would have it before the official issue was received. The General took it in good part and the garrison was amused for a whole day. Another sartorial incident of those days occurred when an officer was reported for being found in uniform one night in a house in Cairo, where the wearing of the Queen's uniform was not tolerated. When asked for his reasons for thus bringing discredit on the uniform, he replied by forwarding a copy of the order requiring officers to wear uniform at all times when not engaged in recreation, and asked respectfully for a definition of "recreation !"

Early in March, 1885, my chief—Williams-Freeman—went with the mounted infantry on a small expedition to Suakin and I was ordered to take his place at Cairo. Shortly after going there I was sent for one morning to see Sir Evelyn Baring (the late Lord Cromer), who told me that the sons of Zobeir Pasha, who lived in Cairo, were to be arrested and sent to Alexandria. It appeared that papers had been found up the Nile indicating that Zobeir intended to stir up trouble in Lower Egypt. Zobeir himself at the time was at Alexandria, and it had been decided not to arrest the sons until his arrest had been carried out. The great point was to keep the matter as secret as possible as otherwise the Soudanese, of whom there were a considerable number in the locality where Zobeir lived in Cairo, would give trouble. Having got my orders I casually rode round about Zobeir's house to make sure of the geography of the place, and after the men's dinner collected a dozen mounted and sixteen military foot police in an empty stable at Ras-el-Tin Barracks. I had been specially warned not to do anything which would give the hostile press an excuse to say that any violation of the privacy of the harem had occurred, and also to effect the arrests as expeditiously as possible so that the natives living in the vicinity should not take the alarm. At 5-30 p.m. word came that the arrest of Zobeir at Alexandria had been

successfully effected. We at once started off, the foot police in four cabs, as fast as the horses would go, surrounded the house, posting men at the various possible exits, and with Fenwick Bey, the capable chief of the Cairo Native Police, who accompanied me, I entered the house, and holding up a few blacks in the courtyard sent for and arrested the Wakeel, who was a relation of some sort to Zobeir. He was told to produce the two sons. One of them, a young man of about twenty years of age, appeared shortly afterwards, but the most important, a boy of fourteen and reputed to be Zobeir's favourite son, was not forthcoming. After some palaver we decided to search the house, locking each room after we had searched it. The boy was not in any of the rooms outside the harem and we knew he must be with the women there. The situation now became a little difficult. It was imperative to get the boy, and quickly, but it was almost as important not to force any door behind which women might be.

The men we had arrested swore by all their gods that the boy was not there. We told them we knew he was and meant to get him. At last the Wakeel was told to go to the harem and put all the women into one room and lock it. We kept out of sight till this was done, and then searched and fastened up all the other rooms. They were empty. Now only one room was left, full of women—and the boy. The Wakeel was told that if the boy did not come out at once we would go in and bring him out.

A certain amount of fingering of revolvers went on under the Wakeel's nose, and we won. The boy came out, grinning from ear to ear, and evidently vastly amused at all the trouble he had given us. I told him in my best Arabic that if he came along quietly we would do him no harm, and, taking him by the arm, led him down to one of the cabs. As I made way for him to get in before me, he made a dive through the victoria, only, alas! to find himself in the arms of a stout foot policeman, who was waiting on the other side of the carriage for this possible manceuvre. The

boy roared with laughter, and we drove off quite good friends, my left arm through his, and in my right hand my revolver, which I told him would assuredly go off if he tried to escape again. We made the best pace to the station, where a train was waiting, and saw the party safely off under escort to Alexandria, whence they embarked that night on H.M.S. " Iris " for Gibraltar with the old Pasha.

Shortly after this incident my chief returned from Suakin, and I went back to my permanent billet at Alexandria, having in the meantime been confirmed as a Staff Captain, with the local and temporary rank of Captain. It was about this time that the military authorities in Egypt tackled the spread of venereal disease which was creating havoc among our soldiers. Some of the cases that were embarked for England from up the Nile were terrible to witness, and both Cairo and Alexandria were overrun with European women, over whom there was no control. The foreign Consuls were ready to help in every way, but said that they must have a lead from the British Consul.

Acting under my General's orders, I went to see Sir Charles Cookson, the British Consul at Alexandria, who would not listen to a word about any system of control, and told me that if he heard any more about the matter he would report it at once to the authorities in England. It was, therefore, impossible to take any step that might implicate the Government, and the only thing to be done was for the military quietly to adopt such measures as might be possible, with the risk of being called to book by Exeter Hall purists, to whom the health and lives of soldiers were apparently of no account. A scheme of inspection for European women (the natives were already under strict inspection carried out by the Egyptian Government) was started at Cairo and Alexandria, the control being in the hands of the Military Police, and the inspection carried out by officers of the Royal Army Medical Corps, who volunteered for the work. The first medical

officer to volunteer at Alexandria was Captain Park,* who afterwards lost his life when with Stanley in Central Africa.

The only actual pressure that could be applied was the placing of all houses where our conditions were not fulfilled out of bounds. By means of printed health certificate forms, constantly checked by special plain-clothes policemen in the two towns, a very fair control was kept over the frail and dangerous ladies, who, once the scheme was well started, accepted it with good grace. Although by no means perfect, nor so effectual as a system supported by the various Consulates would have been, venereal disease was before long brought down to 2 per cent. of the garrison, and kept at about that figure for over two years. Major-General Lord Frankfort de Montmorency, who succeeded General Lennox in command at Alexandria, hearing that questions were likely to be asked on the subject in the House of Commons, decided that the scheme could not be continued. Within three months after control was taken off the disease had risen to 8 per cent., a sufficient answer to those who live in the mists of ideal morality.

During the summer of 1885 the embarkation of the troops from up the Nile kept us busy ; there being only two Staff officers in the command, one of us spent most of his time on the quays—generally myself, being the junior, but it was excellent experience.

So the years rolled by, and on 7th September, 1889, I bade farewell to Egypt on the completion of my Staff appointment, having laid in a stock of practical knowledge given to few of my age and service, for I was still a subaltern in my regiment, and after having held the rank of Captain for four years had to step down to my normal level.

Early in 1890 I rejoined the 1st Gordons in Ceylon, headquarters being at Colombo with detachments at Kandy and

* Captain Park, R.A.M.C. (1857-1893). Accompanied the Desert Column to the relief of Gordon. In January, 1887, volunteered to go with Stanley to the relief of Emin Pasha, and died from the hardships of the venture. Stanley placed on record that without Captain Park's services the expedition would have been a failure.

Trincomali. In March I was lucky enough to be sent to the last-named place with my company, and there remained for some thirteen months. Owing to the heat and absence of facilities serious training was almost non-existent in Ceylon in those days, but the time passed pleasantly enough for both officers and men. The infantry company, together with some garrison artillery and Royal Engineers at Trincomali, were quartered in the old Dutch fort on a rocky peninsula overlooking Cottiar Bay.

The place was originally captured from the Dutch by a British fleet under Admiral Watson in 1796, the troops on board being commanded by Colonel Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington. The bungalows, small red-tiled little places with rows of outhouses, or go-downs as they are called, between them and the sea, were built round two sides of a grassy space, on which at night a herd of deer came down from the promontory beyond to graze. The origin of the numerous go-downs attached to each bungalow is attributed to the fact that in the days of the Dutch occupation the officers of the garrison used to combine business with soldiering, and when off duty carried on a lucrative trade with the natives, the go-downs being used as storehouses for their stock-in-trade. Near the top of the promontory lies an old graveyard, where soldiers who won and held this outpost of Empire rest in their last sleep. I always look back on my time at Trinco, as the place is familiarly called, as one of the most pleasant years of my service, and my subaltern, E. B. Towse,* and myself were by no means overjoyed when the time came to rejoin headquarters.

The jungle was only a mile from the fort, and in a few hours one could shoot anything from a snipe to an elephant; indeed one officer going out directly after his chota hazri (early tea) shot an elephant and was back again to breakfast. The place, too, at that time was the headquarters of the East India Squadron, which

* Captain E. B. Towse, V.C., C.B.E., whose name is so well known in connection with Institutions for the Blind and organizations on behalf of ex-soldiers.

meant frequent visits by the Admiral to Admiralty House, and the presence of one or more warships in the beautiful island-studded harbour. Communication with the outer world, except by sea, entailed an all-night journey through the jungle in a bullock coach to Matale, the railway terminus, with the off-chance of being held up on the way by elephants.

During a visit to Kandy I met an old retired officer, Colonel Watson, who had gone out to join the Ceylon Rifles in 1820, and had known my uncle when on Sir John Wilson's staff. The old Colonel, though somewhat infirm, retained an unclouded remembrance of his long service in the island, and used to relate how when the British troops advanced from the coast to Kandy to suppress the rebellion of 1848, the bands and bugles had to be sent to the head of the columns to drive off elephants that blocked the way—a wise precaution, for an attack on an elephant with the old “Brown Bess” would probably have resulted in little harm being done to the elephant, but much disorganization in the column. This Colonel Watson was the man who pursued and captured the Kandian prince who led the rebellion, afterwards hanging him on a tree at Matale, for which the Colonel was taken to account by the Government at home.

At the end of 1891, during which year I received my promotion to Captain, the battalion received orders to move to India, and we arrived at Karachi on 15th January, 1892, to be greeted with news of the deaths of H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence and Tewfik Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt. The battalion remained in camp at Umballa till the hot weather set in, when we moved up to the hill station of Sabathu.

In the late autumn of 1892 I was overtaken by one of those disasters for which the soldier must always be prepared. An officer of our 2nd battalion had passed into the Staff College, and H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, had given a nomination to another officer in the same

battalion. As the regulations of those days admitted of only one officer per battalion being at the Staff College at the same time, the 1st battalion was directed to send an officer home on transfer to the 2nd. No one volunteering, I, as junior Captain, was ordered to go, which, apart from considerable financial loss, resulted in my missing both the Chitral and Tirah campaigns. I was only too glad that my brother officer, who was and still is an old and valued friend, should get his nomination, but when in after years at the War Office I had a say in the destinies of officers, the remembrance of this experience often recurred, and I took care that, where avoidable, hardship and financial loss should not be the result of any action to which I was a party.

Early in the new year I found myself with the 2nd battalion, in the Royal Barracks (now Collins's Barracks) at Dublin. The battalion, like all draft-drained home battalions, was very weak, and the system of training in the garrison after my Indian experience was somewhat of a shock. Beyond formal parades on the barrack-square, route marches, and musketry, the only outlet was to take a company consisting of perhaps twenty men into the Phoenix Park, and there endeavour to work sufficiently on the imagination of the men to get them to look on paths as impassable rivers and rhododendron clumps as rocky kopjes. To crown all, the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Wolseley, used to take his constitutional ride in the park, and if he saw any troops would ride up to the officer and question him as to what he was doing. No doubt it was well meant, but company officers were not accustomed to constant supervision by a field-marshal, and on one occasion a wretched subaltern, through pure fright, gave the great man an absurd answer to a question, and found himself reported to his commanding officer.

It is not a bad thing to have Staff experience when young, for one learns that generals, and even field-marshals, are but human after all, and the great thing is always to have a ready answer on

one's tongue. Even if it is not absolutely correct, there are many generals who will be none the wiser, and the situation will be saved. I recommend the same method to soldiers when dealing with politicians.

Lord Houghton* was the Lord-Lieutenant at the time, and Ireland was in the throes of one of the many Home Rule Bills that have from time to time disturbed the Island of the Saints. In consequence "the Castle" was more or less boycotted by Society (with a big "S"), and it was amusing to hear the professional classes in Dublin explaining how it was impossible for them to attend functions at the Castle in imitation of the County land-owning class.

On the occasion of the ball that year at the Castle on St. Patrick's Day I was on duty in command of the guard, and watching the company ascending the big staircase I was certainly not impressed by either the beauty or fashion of the crowd. With the exception of the wives of officers of the garrison, who I believe received a hint to attend, the company seemed rather out of their element. As I watched from the landing half-way up the staircase, I noticed the faces of my men on the lower staircase relaxing under their feather bonnets, and, following their eyes, perceived a lady nervously adjusting her gloves, tripping up the stairs, who, having turned up her dress from the knees downwards and pinned it at the waist, had forgotten to let it down on alighting from her cab, thereby exposing a considerable amount of lining and white petticoat. She was quite unconscious of her lapse, and I had but a couple of seconds to decide whether I should tell her, or let her pass on into the Viceregal presence. As she passed I touched her arm and murmured that I was afraid that something was wrong with her dress. The poor lady, already worked up to a state of nervousness at what was, I imagine, her first plunge into high society, would have collapsed if I had not steadied her till she was

* The Marquess of Crewe, K.G., etc. Ambassador to France.

sufficiently collected to descend the staircase and unreef her garment.

Little did I think as I strolled about the streets of Dublin, and casually glanced at the dome of the Custom House, or the colonnade of the Four Courts, that I should one day watch those buildings disappearing in the flames of the civil war. Mainly for reasons of finance I applied at the end of the year for a Volunteer adjutancy, and in January, 1893, was appointed to the 2nd Volunteer Battalion the Gordon Highlanders, a corps drawn from that part of Aberdeenshire east of the River Don as far north as Turriff. Lord Haldane had not then created out of the old Volunteer Corps that wonderfully efficient organization the Territorial Force, which contributed so grandly to our country's victory in the Great War, and the condition of affairs in some of the Volunteer corps was almost unbelievable. The unit I took over had for five years been under an adjutant who took little or no interest in it, and was only there for his personal convenience. Officers and men were ignorant of the most elementary movements or handling of arms, and apparently only joined to enjoy beer and biscuits at the few drills which were held during the summer. The uniform consisted of a scarlet doublet, trews, and Glengarry cap.

At the first parade I attended of the headquarter company at Ellon men turned up in every conceivable kit—some in uniform with bowler hats or cloth caps, some with ordinary serge trousers below their doublets, and a considerable number with canvas shoes instead of boots. On one occasion later on, when I had instilled some respect for their uniform into the corps, an officer—a very earnest one too—came on to parade correctly dressed, except that instead of a claymore he had an old rusty curved hussar sabre of Peninsular days hanging to his sword slings. I called him up, and asked him what he meant by it, and he answered quite naturally, “Well, you see, Adjutant, I left my claymore at home, and so just took down this sword from over the fireplace in the armoury.” Soldiers will appreciate the humour of the situation !

The state of affairs was such that I despaired of doing anything with the corps, and seriously thought of resigning. The Colonel, John Rae, who was anxious that matters should be put right, gave me a free hand, and backed my endeavours splendidly when there was trouble, and there often was during the first two years, for useless officers and men had to be got rid of, the hours of instruction lengthened, and the business of volunteering taken really seriously. I had my reward, for at the end of my five years the corps was stronger than it had ever been before, every subaltern could drill a company on his own, and every captain the battalion, while, best of all, the battalion gained the highest figure of merit for musketry in Great Britain.

It was hard work, and not very pleasant in winter driving many miles at night in a gig to find perhaps only two or three non-commissioned officers for instruction ; still it was worth it. It gave one a good knowledge of many of the villages from which the men of my regiment were drawn, and thus helped me to increase the sympathetic touch so essential in handling men, and when the Territorial Force came into being at a time when I was in the War Office I had a good working knowledge of the class of man from which the force was drawn. Nothing could have been finer than the physical standard of the men of the 2nd V.B.G.H.—all of them countrymen, thick-set, not tall, doing their full day's work at the plough, or whatever their business might be, walking some of them five and six miles to drill, and then drilling steadily for three good hours, the last hour in extended order and mostly at the double. The officers, too, were untiring in their endeavours to be a credit to themselves and their companies.

The old corps was swept away on the creation of the Territorial Force, but many of its members gave their lives for their country in South Africa, and others without doubt in the Great War. The authorities at the War Office in those days legislated for Volunteers on the assumption that all corps were similar to the London and

great town units, with their large drill halls and money at command. Some of the regulations that were issued were childishly absurd and impossible of performance when applied to country corps scattered over wide areas, yet in physique and endurance the men who composed such corps were the very flower of the land, as was proved when the Volunteer companies were sent out to the South African War.

The year 1899 saw me back in India with the 2nd battalion, and curiously enough at the same station, Umballa, where I had been quartered eight years before. During the hot weather only half the battalion went to the hills, the other half to which my company belonged remained at Umballa. Our commanding officer—Lieut.-Colonel Dick-Cunyngham, V.C.—was of the best type of regimental officer. Devoted to his profession and his regiment, he spared neither himself nor others in his endeavours to make and maintain the battalion second to none. One of his hobbies was to deploy the battalion into line, and then move it steadily at the double across the “maidan,” the best part of a mile, and back again. At first a proportion of officers and men fell out, but before long the manœuvre was carried through without a hitch, and though some grouseurs could not see the object of it, the day came early in the South African War when this particular training stood the battalion in good stead.

During the summer the news of the imbroglio between the Home Government and Paul Kruger caused a severe outbreak of war fever, which soldiers, especially the younger ones, are so apt to catch on the flimsiest pretext. In all the messes and canteens the most impossible and improbable yarns raised expectation at one moment to fever heat, only to be doused to blank despair the next.

Our Colonel was not a man to lose any chances, and when I took a month's leave to Simla in August he told me to keep my ears open, and let him know any reliable news I might hear.

Several times he drove up from Solon for a few hours to keep in touch with the Commander-in-Chief and the Headquarter Staff, and I have no doubt that the selection of the battalion for active service was in a great measure due to his personal exertions.

I was amusing myself at Simla taking part in amateur theatricals, when on the night of 8th September, 1899, while playing the part of Mr. Gardiner in Haddon Chambers's play of "Captain Swift," I was handed a telegram ordering me to rejoin forthwith, as the battalion was under orders for South Africa. I told Sir Howard Mellis, who was then running the theatre, that I must be off at daybreak the next day, and he begged me to ask for another day's leave, as the piece had another night to run, all seats being booked, and I had no understudy. I pointed out to him that I was the last person who could, under the circumstances, ask for an extension of leave, but that if he could arrange it with my Colonel, well and good ; otherwise I must leave at daybreak. He obtained the necessary permission, and when the curtain fell the next night I received what, to an amateur, was quite an ovation, due no doubt rather to the fact that it had become known that I belonged to a unit ordered to the front than to my histrionic effort.

CHAPTER IV.

ON 18th September, 1899, the battalion entrained at Umballa for Bombay, embarking at that port on two ships, the "Palitana" and "Sirsa," on 23rd September. By a coincidence, on the day on which we entrained H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (His late Majesty King Edward VII) presented new colours to our 1st battalion at Balmoral. A happy omen.

Colonel Dick-Cunyngham had very wisely ordered me as mess president to lay in a considerable quantity of stores for the officer's mess, and we had arranged to take our Goanese mess cook and his assistants, who had volunteered to come with us. At Bombay I found that none of the stores had been put on board and had a hectic time collecting and shipping them, but while engaged on this duty the hearts of the cook and his assistants failed them, and they made themselves scarce. As we hauled out of the harbour one of my last views of India was an energetic old gentleman on the quay going through the motions of bayonet exercise with his white umbrella to encourage us, no doubt, to greater exertions against Paul Kruger and his Boers!

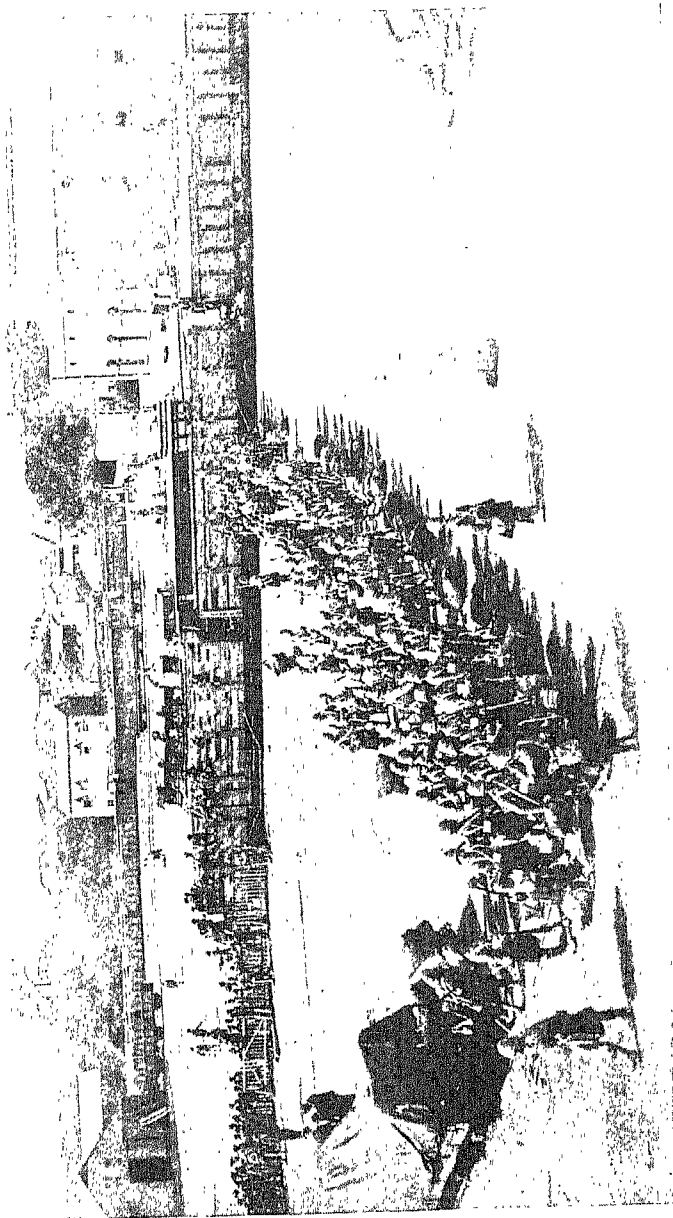
On 8th October we arrived at Durban, disembarking the next day, when the battalion entrained for Ladysmith leaving me behind to bring on the mess stores, and a cook if I could find one. Durban at this time was full of refugees, and everybody was overjoyed at the arrival of the troops and were loud in their protestations and exhibitions of loyalty, which did not, however, prevent the tradesmen from charging anyone in uniform considerably higher prices than those charged to the inhabitants. On the evening of 11th October I rejoined the battalion at Ladysmith, our train being held up at Pietermaritzburg to allow the "special" carrying Sir

George White* and his Staff, bound for the same place, to pass. On the following day—12th—we heard that war had been declared by the Boers, and at 2 a.m. that night had our first experience of a tiring march at the instigation of an “intelligent Kaffir,” as we regimental officers nicknamed the natives who were employed by the Intelligence Branch of the Staff. It apparently took that branch some time before they were able to gauge with any degree of accuracy the information brought in by their dusky agents, judging by the many occasions during the first few weeks of the campaign when we trudged in search of non-existing Boers. Still it was excellent training and hardened up all ranks for the task before them. The next ten days were spent in shifting our camp from one place to another, brigade-training under our Brigadier, Colonel Ian Hamilton† an old Gordon Highlander, varied with the alarms and excursions that are inevitable when an enemy is in the immediate vicinity, to say nothing of the hourly excitement due to rumours of the wildest description. On 20th October news arrived of the defeat of the Boers under Lucas Meyer by the troops commanded by Major-General Penn-Symons at Talana, this being the first of many occasions on which the Boers improperly used the white flag in order to mislead our troops. The following day, the 21st, the five companies of the battalion not on outpost duty were having a quiet morning cleaning up the camp, when at 1-45 p.m. we got a sudden order to entrain at once to reinforce a force consisting of detachments of the Imperial Light Horse, 5th Lancers, 5th Dragoon Guards, a battery R.F.A., half the 1st Devons, and 1st Manchesters under Major-General J. French‡ at a place,

* Field-Marshal Sir George Stuart White, V.C., G.C.B., O.M., G.C.M.G. (1835-1912). Colonel, the Gordon Highlanders. Served in the Afghan War, 1878-1880, where he gained the V.C. Quartermaster-General, 1898-1899. Commanded the troops in Natal, 1899-1900. Governor of Gibraltar, 1900-1904. Governor of Chelsea Hospital.

† General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B., G.C.M.G. Colonel of the Gordon Highlanders.

‡ Field-Marshal the Earl of Ypres, K.P., G.C.B., O.M. Commander-in-Chief, British Expeditionary Force in France, 1914-1915. Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1918-1921.



THE 2ND BATT. GORDON HIGHLANDERS ENTRAINING AT DURBAN FOR LADYSMITH
October 9, 1899

Elandslaagte, some fourteen miles north of Ladysmith. The half-battalion of the Devons in camp and another battery of field artillery were also hurried out. At 2-45 p.m. we detrained on the railway track some four miles from the Boer position, and marched over a stretch of long open undulations in open column with companies in section columns. The Manchesters were on our right front, the Devons in attack formation to our left. At 3 p.m. the guns opened on some of the enemy occupying a hill to the west of the railway, but after a few rounds limbered up and moved forward on the right of the infantry to a ridge towards our front, whence they opened a heavy fire on the Boer position. The enemy's guns replied and were well served, but as their shell burst only on impact not much damage was done. Our formation was then changed to column of half-battalions, companies in single rank at about a hundred yards distance between companies. Crossing behind the guns we lost sight of the Manchesters altogether, and at about 5-30 p.m. reached a rocky ridge where we closed up and lay down under a fairly heavy rifle fire. A barbed-wire fence ran along the brow of the ridge and several officers and men were hit before it was broken down. Word was then passed that the Gordons were to rush and take the guns. One by one the companies topped the ridge, each one bearing away to the right to prolong the line, and fixing bayonets on the move we raced over the intervening space. The Boer position was on a ridge about 1,200 yards away somewhat higher than that from which we started and with sharper slopes, the shallow valley being covered with boulders and large stones. The enemy's fire, though severe and accurate, had no effect in checking the wild rush of the Gordons. A few rounds were fired when, to get breath, men threw themselves down for a moment, but the total expenditure during the day in the whole battalion was under ten rounds per man. A number of Boers held their ground till we were close up, standing and firing point-blank into us as we rushed the position.

Rumour had it that many were German ex-soldiers, their guns being worked under the command of a Colonel Schiel, a German ex-officer. Beyond the crest was a narrow plateau, across which the enemy retired towards their laager, which lay in a hollow between the plateau and two conical kopjes from both of which an accurate fire swept the plateau. Arrived at the crest overlooking the laager, some of the men were already pushing down the slope when a Boer was seen with a white flag on his rifle. The "Cease Fire" sounded, and thinking that the fight was over officers began to collect their men, when suddenly the man with the white flag—Field-Cornet Pretorius—with some twenty Boers dashed towards the slope on which we stood and poured in a rapid fire at about forty yards' range. This treacherous use of the white flag cost us many lives, and our Brigadier—Ian Hamilton—had a narrow escape, the officer standing next to him—Major Denne—being shot dead. Drummer May, of the Gordons, at once sounded the "Advance," another rush carried the troops over the Boer laager, and the fight, so far as the infantry were concerned, was over. Darkness was rapidly descending on the field and to some extent balked the cavalry, now in full pursuit of the broken enemy, from sweeping up the remainder of the commando, although they exacted a heavy toll.

Pickets were thrown out, and I was ordered to take what men I could collect of my company to search for and bring in the wounded. Rain began to fall, and as only one or two candle lanterns were available the bringing-down of the wounded in blankets over the boulder-strewn slopes was a difficult and painful task. Lord Ava and Colonel Frank Rhodes,* two names which carry an affectionate remembrance to those who knew them, volunteered their help. Some could not be moved and were made as comfortable as circumstances admitted where they fell. The

* Colonel Francis William Rhodes, C.B. (1851-1905). Eldest brother of the late Cecil Rhodes. Served in the 1st Royal Dragoons.

Boer general, Kock, a venerable old man with long white beard, was left with a man to look after him, but died the next day. One of my subalterns, Ian Campbell—a great-nephew of Lochiel, who commanded the 92nd Gordon Highlanders at Quatre Bras—shared the same fate. Field-Cornet Pretorius, the same who misused the white flag, was badly wounded in the leg, which was afterwards amputated. A son of old General Kock who was lying wounded in the laager was one of the first to be dressed by our doctor. He afterwards published some sworn affidavits in the Transvaal press in regard to the treatment he had received, which for hard lying would be difficult to beat.

About 3 a.m. the grisly work was finished and I was drinking some coffee given me by one of the men when General French rode past and I offered him a cup. This was the first time I came in touch with one whom in after years it was my privilege to serve in several capacities.

A Boer field state picked up on the field gave the Boers' numbers as about 1,800, with two field guns and a Maxim. The field guns had originally been captured from Dr. Jameson's force at the time of the raid, and were afterwards used in the defences of Ladysmith. The British force numbered some 2,100 all ranks, their losses being 47 killed and 156 wounded, of which the Gordons lost 129. Of the nineteen officers present with the five companies of the battalion five were killed or died of wounds, and eight were wounded, a heavy toll. Had it been possible for us to have carried out a methodical attack in extended order on the position the losses would have been far less, but time was all-important in order to pin the enemy to his ground and prevent his disappearance under cover of dusk, a manœuvre he invariably indulged in during the later stages of the war. A few more blows such as Elandslaagte, even at great sacrifice of life, and the South African War would not have dragged on its weary course of years.

The troops, the wounded, and prisoners returned to Ladysmith

early the next morning, parties being sent out later under a flag of truce to bury the dead.

On the 25th October we were sent out with other troops to cover the entry into the town of the Dundee column which had fought the Boers at Talana on 20th. The troops of the column looked very fit, but the native followers, with their wives and children, presented a miserable and forlorn spectacle.

At 3 a.m. on 30th the battalion fell in and marched to the brigade rendezvous behind Limit Hill, together with the Devons, Manchesters, and Rifle Brigade (the latter having just arrived by train), some cavalry, and mounted irregulars. As we were marching out a man suddenly jumped out of a ditch in the darkness close to me, and asked who we were. He was an officer who had escaped from the disaster at Nicholson's Nek during the earlier hours of the night. In the confusion he had been knocked down in the stampede of the mountain battery mules and on recovering consciousness made his way across country, and remained with us during the rest of the day. This was the first intimation we had of the catastrophe, which involved a force of some 1,200 men of the Irish Fusiliers and the Gloucester Regiment. From the top of Limit Hill the field of battle spread like a panorama at our feet, except for the broken ground on the extreme right and left. For our slow-moving infantry the frontage was out of all proportion to our strength, and the attempt to turn the enemy's left proved abortive owing to the rapidity with which the Boers could move, practically unseen, on their well-trained ponies from one point to another. On this day we were introduced for the first time to the 6-inch Creuset guns—"Long Toms," as the soldiery christened them—and to the pompoms, $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch machine guns, which were later adopted by our army. The artillery duel started at about 5 a.m. and at 9-30 a.m. the Boer guns were practically silent, except a high-velocity gun on Pepworth Hill which was worked by one man, who could be distinctly seen through glasses

carrying up the charges, loading and firing the gun. Heavy rifle fire could be heard away to the right, and the Manchester Regiment was shortly despatched in that direction. To the left parties of Boers were seen leading their horses down the steep slopes of Tinta Inyoni, then mounting and galloping across our front under cover of a low ridge about one-and-a-half miles off. Many newspaper correspondents had by this time reached Ladysmith, and most of them were congregated on Limit Hill, among others the late Bennett Burleigh. It was amusing to listen to their conversation and the arguments for or against remaining in Ladysmith. I remember Bennett Burleigh very forcibly declaring that he was going to quit that night. Naturally the tactics employed in the fight going on under our eyes came in for much criticism, and the uninitiated would have thought that many Napoleons had mistaken their profession and been lost to the British Army !

At 9-30 a.m. orders came for the battalion to support the right of the line, and we moved to a kopje at the end of a rocky ridge running east from Limit Hill, where we took up a position to cover the retirement of the guns and infantry who were being pressed by heavy rifle and pompom fire. Shortly afterwards the Imperial Light Horse were pushed forward on the plain below us to ease the pressure on the retiring infantry. It was a most inspiring piece of work. The regiment moved out at an even pace, dismounted, extended, and passing through the retiring infantry checked the pursuing Boers from emerging on to the plain, with a calmness and steadiness that could not have been surpassed on a formal parade. When all the troops had passed our ridge orders came for us to retire, which we did undisturbed except for a few 6-inch shells from the gun on Pepworth Hill. At the outskirts of the town our Commander-in-Chief, Sir George White, who was also the Colonel of the regiment, was sitting on his horse watching us as we passed. Never, I think, have I seen so sad an expression on

any man's face. The casualties were not heavy, except for the number of prisoners captured at Nicholson's Nek, but the day was lost, and the following night communication between Ladysmith and the outer world by rail or road was cut. The Boers owed their success not to any superior generalship, but to their mobility and knowledge of the terrain. Of generalship there was little. When disaster overtook our troops at Nicholson's Nek the town lay practically open to an attack from that direction with a line of retreat open to the enemy by Blauwbank in case of need; nor could our troops have returned in sufficient time to prevent the destruction of stores, or of the naval guns that arrived by train during the fight which would have rendered a long defence of the town impossible.

Under an arrangement between Sir George White and General Joubert, the sick, wounded, and any civilians who wished to leave the town were moved on 5th November to a camp at Intombi, some four miles down the line. A good many civilians refused to go, and passed a resolution to that effect at a meeting presided over by Archdeacon Barker, the proceedings being closed with the singing of "Rule Britannia," and "God Save the Queen."

From this time onwards we settled down to siege life, the most monotonous experience a soldier can undergo. Several times at short intervals we had to shift our camp, but finally came to rest on the bank of the Klip River close to the bridge, and having pitched our tents set to work to dig ourselves in. The soil being sandy and water at no great depth from the surface, the "dugouts" were not so elaborate as those of other units on higher ground, and had the additional disadvantage of being liable to flooding when the river overflowed, as it did several times during the siege. As a rule we lived in our tents, diving into the "dugouts" only when shelling was expected or in progress. The Boers rarely shelled on Sundays or in wet weather, and only

occasionally at night, which was a great mistake on their part. Had they, especially during the last two months of the siege, consistently dropped shells about the town every night it would have materially affected the health and nerves of the garrison, which by that time were on the down grade. The number of shells dropped into the town daily varied from half a dozen to a couple of hundred, and the resulting loss of life was insignificant.

The daily round of outpost duty, occasional hurried concentrations for attacks that never materialized, and the usual work necessary to keep the camp clean and the "dugouts" shell-proof, began to pall heavily as the weeks rolled on, especially when hopes were dashed by the failure of Sir Redvers Buller* to force the passage of the Tugela. Still both officers and men were extremely cheery and the health of the battalion good, thanks to the exertions of our little Irish doctor. Under his supervision a most elaborate filter system, which supplied sufficient drinking water for every officer and man, was erected under the river bank, the most stringent orders being issued and enforced against drinking the putrid liquid in the river.

Many and amusing were the stories told of our little Irishman, Walker, who, alas! sleeps his last sleep on the banks of the Klip. One of them is worth relating. After we had been shut up for some three months, and the men were beginning to feel the strain and to be affected by the want of proper food, the queue of those reporting sick each morning grew longer and longer. Many were just weary of it all. The little Irishman in the medical "dugout" would turn to a man: "What's the matter wid ye?" "Diarrhoea, sir." "Have ye been dhrinking river water?" "No, sir." "Have ye been eating green peaches?" (the wild peaches growing in the scrub, which the men were forbidden to

* General the Rt. Hon. Sir Redvers Henry Buller, V.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G. (1839-1908). Quartermaster-General, 1887. Under-Secretary for Ireland, 1887. Adjutant-General, 1890-1897. Commanding the Forces in South Africa, 1899-1900.

touch). "No, sir." "Then to hell out of this; ye can't have diarrhoea!"

The dearth of letters and papers was to some extent compensated for by the hourly rumours that pervaded the town, which became wilder and more improbable as day succeeded day. One which received credence among the men, mainly because of their hatred of the Irishmen fighting for the Boers, was that the Boer Irish Brigade having been reduced to seventy men by desertion was told off to carry shells to the 6-inch guns on Bulwana Hill, a bottle of whisky in the gun emplacement being the prize for the first man up! A royal salute with live shell was fired on 9th November in honour of the Prince of Wales's birthday, the troops cheering from their "dugouts." Rumour next day had it that, as a result, twenty-five Boers had been placed *hors de combat*, which if not true was at all events comforting.

On St. Andrew's Night we held high revelry in the mess, and gave a dinner party, among the guests being Sir George White and his Chief of Staff, Sir Archibald Hunter,* Captain the Hon. H. Lambton, R.N.,† Colonel Ian Hamilton, Frank Rhodes, Edward Ward,‡ and Lionel James,|| the cheery correspondent of *The Times*. The menu may be of interest:—

SCOTCH BROTH.	SALMON.
HAGGIS.	SADDLE OF MUTTON.
TURKEY AND HAM.	
ASPARAGUS.	
STEWED FRUIT.	HADDOCK TOAST.

washed down with champagne and whisky. It must not be supposed that this was an example of our usual bill of fare.

* General Sir Archibald Hunter, G.C.B., G.C.V.O. Lieutenant-General on Staff and commanded 10th Division in South Africa.

† Admiral of the Fleet the Hon. Sir Hedworth Meux, G.C.B. He commanded the Naval Brigade in Ladysmith.

‡ Colonel Sir Edward Willis Duncan Ward, Bt., G.B.E., K.C.B. Was in charge of supplies in Ladysmith. Permanent Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 1901-14. Chief, Metropolitan Special Constabulary.

|| Colonel Lionel James, D.S.O., C.B.E. Commanded King Edward's Horse in the Great War.



MAJUBA FROM LAING'S NEK

Thanks to the foresight of Colonel Dick-Cunyngham, we arrived in Ladysmith with a considerable amount of mess stores, which with care kept the officers on a reasonable diet up to the middle of January, 1900. As soon as it became evident that all expectation of relief by Christmas was doomed to disappointment, economy of our *cache* of food became the order of the day, but up to the end of the siege members of the mess enjoyed a rasher of bacon for breakfast, and a bottle of some sort of wine was served round in egg cups every Sunday night to drink to the health of "Absent Friends." Prices of foodstuffs rose automatically directly the investment was complete, and although throughout the siege there was plenty of meat, either beef or horse, the latter being the more tender and digestible, bread, biscuit, and every kind of vegetable soon ran out.

By the middle of February eggs were selling at 50s. a dozen, small potatoes 1s. each, corncob 3s. each, and a $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. tin of navy-cut tobacco £3. A story went round at the time of an officer who, being the happy possessor of a tin of sardines, was offered in exchange a life member's ticket for the Calcutta Zoological Gardens! By the middle of February the daily ration of mealy meal was down to four ounces per man, and it was poor stuff at that. Our men ate it as porridge, or "burgoo," as the cooks christened it, but some units, it was said, made flat cakes by mixing it with dubbin. It would be interesting to know the percentage of enteric fever cases among those who favoured this delicacy.

Early on the morning of 7th December, 1899, Sir A. Hunter led a body of men to Gun Hill, and there destroyed two of the Boer guns, the Rifle Brigade, under Colonel Metcalfe, carrying out a similar operation four days later, when a 4.5 howitzer was blown up on Surprise Hill. From then onwards the Boers became more alert in their outpost work, which had been very slipshod and slovenly up to that time—a state of affairs that is

always difficult to remedy in an undisciplined force. If, instead of attacking only two guns on the morning of 7th December, plans had been laid to attack every gun position round the beleaguered town, I am convinced that practically the whole of the guns could have been rendered useless, and the loss to our troops would have been small ; nor would there have been any difficulty in getting picked volunteers from every unit for the enterprise. Once the first successful attack had taken place on the 7th, the enemy naturally were on the alert, and took precautions which had been previously neglected.

On 18th December the garrison were informed in a general order of the failure of the relieving force to dislodge the enemy at Colenso, and a Boer signaller helioed through a message to the effect that ten of Buller's guns had been taken. The garrison was still in communication with the outer world by means of the heliograph by day and flash-signalling at night, and urgent private messages were occasionally allowed through, to be telegraphed on from General Buller's force. On Christmas Day Colonel Frank Rhodes sent a Christmas greeting to his brother, Cecil Rhodes, then shut up in Kimberley : " Christmas greetings. How thoroughly you have misunderstood the situation." This was a gently sarcastic allusion to Cecil Rhodes's belief that the Boers would not fight.

And so for the besieged the year and the century dragged to its weary close, the elements celebrating the occasion with torrential rain, which flooded many of the " dugouts." However, we brewed some rum punch in the mess " dugout," and drank success to the New Year and confusion to the Queen's enemies.

On 6th January, 1900, the enemy made their one determined effort to carry the town by assault, which happily failed, partly owing to want of co-ordination in the execution of the attack, but mainly to the hard fighting of our troops. So far as the fighting

on Cæsar's Camp was concerned, it was purely a company officer's battle, a detailed account of which may not be without interest.

At 11 p.m. on 5th January I paraded my company to escort a 4.7 gun to Wagon Hill, the track to which lay beyond the outpost line. The night was pitch dark, and the transport conductor losing his way, the wagons were brought to a standstill on ground covered with rocks and boulders. The only thing was to make a dead line for the hill, the outline of which could be faintly distinguished. Naturally the intention had been to convey the gun to its new position with as little noise as possible, but the wagons having got into broken ground nothing but a veritable pandemonium of yells and shot-like cracks of whips wielded by the native drivers sufficed to encourage the oxen to haul the wagons out of the *impasse*. Every moment I expected that the Boers, alarmed by the noise, would open fire, and as a matter of fact, as I discovered later, the wagons passed close to one of their scouts. When Wagon Hill was reached and the gun handed over I had a chat with one of our subalterns in command of a working party of a hundred men, and remarked that the Imperial Light Horse outposts were much too close in, no post having been pushed forward down the slope on the enemy's side. At 2-45 a.m. my company reached the outpost line on the return journey, and halted for a time listening to a heavy outburst of rifle fire in the direction from which we had come. As it shortly afterwards died down we continued our march and reached camp just before 4 a.m. The men had hardly gone to their tents when the word was passed for the battalion to turn out.

Distant firing could be heard and bullets were dropping from a high angle into the camp, river, and adjoining scrub. My company, not having had time to get undressed, turned out at once, and crossing the bridge moved through the scrub on the other bank of the river to a spot which had been given the name of Fly Kraal, below the inner slopes of Cæsar's Camp. Colonel Dick-Cunyngham accompanied us to a spot on the far bank just

opposite our camp where he said he would wait and send the other companies on as they came along. This was the first time he had been on parade since he was wounded at Elandslaagte. I never saw him alive again.

I saluted and led my company along the track through the scrub. We had not gone fifty paces when I heard a kind of cry in the rear of the company, and asked what it was, thinking that one of the men had been hit by a dropping bullet. The answer was passed up that the Colonel or Adjutant had fallen off his horse. Afterwards we heard that our Colonel had been struck in the side by a spent bullet; peritonitis set in, and his gallant spirit passed away on the following day. On reaching Fly Kraal we found that of the three companies of the Gordons located there two had gone to Wagon Hill, and one up to Cæsar's Camp. About 10 a.m. the Rifle Brigade passed us on their way up to Cæsar's Camp, and shortly after we followed in the same direction.

Cæsar's Camp is a long, flat-topped hill, the sides to the south and west, in the direction of the enemy, being precipitous boulder-covered slopes clothed in a tangled mass of trees and undergrowth, the northern end terminating in a small round-topped eminence which went by the name of Wagon Hill. From the inner crest of this plateau the enemy would have been able to overlook and dominate with fire the whole of the defences of Ladysmith. Its retention, therefore, was a matter of vital importance. The permanent garrison of the plateau was found by the Manchester Regiment and some Natal Irregulars, while Wagon Hill on this day was held by two companies of Gordons and some Imperial Light Horse, another company of Gordons holding a permanent post on the slopes of the plateau overlooking the town. When we reached the crest of the hill we were told to take the best shelter we could find under the rocky ledges and await developments. This was about midday, and there seemed to be an extraordinary lack of information as to what was happening out in front along the

southern and western crest lines. Colonel Ian Hamilton, who commanded this section of the defences, had gone to restore the situation at Wagon Hill, which was reported to be precarious, and had left the officer commanding the Manchester Regiment in temporary command on the section of the plateau where we found ourselves. The flat top of the plateau being swept by the enemy's gun and rifle fire, the only way to reach the forward crest was by a footpath winding among the rocks on the southern slope. Along this path men dribbled back from time to time to have their wounds dressed, and among them Captain Hon. R. Carnegie, of the Gordons, who early in the morning had been sent with his company to check the Boer advance.

An anecdote illustrative of the soreness felt by the British soldier at the high rates of pay given to colonials, alongside of whom he was serving, is told in connection with the advance of this company. They were working their way along the path and presently came on some Natal Volunteers retiring towards them. One of the colonials called out: "Go on, Jock; we'll support you." The wag of the company without hesitation flung back: "You hairy —, you get seven bob a day, and do as you — well please; we get a shilling, and have to do as we're told. Why the — don't you get on, and we'll support you?" In all our wars when colonial troops are employed this question of pay has rankled, and is not to be wondered at by those who know the worth of the British private soldier.

It appeared that Carnegie had pushed along, powerfully helped by a field battery under Major Abdy in position on the low ground at the foot of the plateau, until he came on the enemy occupying one of the Manchester posts. He rushed this with the bayonet, rescued an officer who had been sent to get information, and held on to the position, thus preventing any advance by the enemy round that flank to the rear of the plateau. In the early morning after surprising the pickets on the forward crest the Boers had

attempted to cross the open plateau, but were driven back by gun and rifle fire from the entrenchments along the inner crest.

Soon after our arrival on the plateau two companies of the Rifle Brigade were sent to support Carnegie's company, and at 1-30 p.m. I was ordered to follow with two companies of the Gordons. Working in single file along the rocky path, to which reference has been made, I came on the two Rifle Brigade companies under cover among the rocks. The senior officer, Captain J. Gough,* told me that the firing line in front was already too crowded, and that he had sent back word to that effect. We then set to work to try and get information as to what was happening further along to the right, and at last word came through that the remains of "G" company of the Gordons, to the right of the Rifle Brigade, required reinforcement. The only way to get there was by rushing half sections one at a time across the open plateau, which was accomplished with little or no loss, due in a great measure to a heavy thunderstorm accompanied by torrential rain which just then burst over the field, and lasted for about an hour.

From this point one was able to form some idea as to the actual position in the front line in this part of the battle. On the right, holding the re-entrant towards Wagon Hill, was a company of the Manchesters and some Manchester Mounted Infantry, on their left a company and the remains of another company of the Gordons, and on the left shoulder of the plateau three companies of the Rifle Brigade; in support along the path on the south slope and among the rocks two companies each of the Rifle Brigade and Gordons. The enemy were in among the rocks and trees just below the crest, though till late in the afternoon a party of them still held a sangar† away on the right where a Manchester picket had been surprised in early morning. Long-range fire was also

* Brigadier-General John Edmund Gough, V.C., C.M.G., A.D.C. (1871-1915). Inspector-General, King's African Rifles. Brigadier-General, General Staff, British Army in France where he met his death.

† Stone entrenchment

sweeping the plateau from a ridge on the far side of the valley below us, some 1,200 yards off. The sangars that had been thrown up for the defence of the position were useless, being sited a few yards back from the crest line, with the result that the Boers had been able to top the ridge and kill the Manchester pickets before any alarm could be given. We found the men dead in their blankets, evidently shot while asleep.

The forward slope, as I have said, was precipitous and covered with rocks, tangled undergrowth, and trees, yet no attempt had been made during the weeks the troops occupied the plateau to clear away a field of fire or create entanglements below. A fortnight's work by night would have made the hill impregnable and unassailable. After the attack steps were taken to carry out what ought to have been done directly Cæsar's Camp was included in the defensive perimeter.

Happily the tumbled rocks afforded fair cover, and by pushing the men a few yards down the slope the Boers were unable to move without being fired at. At one spot I found an N.C.O. had told off one man to roll heavy stones down the incline, while he and two others watched for opportunity to snipe at any Boer who might be dislodged by the stones.

About 6 p.m. the Boers began to move in twos and threes to the spruit in the valley, which on account of the rain was unfordable except in one place. In vain we sent message after message back for a machine gun. Even without it the enemy's loss at the drift must have been heavy, continuous rifle fire being kept up on the spot so long as any Boers were to be seen. About 7 p.m. firing ceased, and some sort of order was established, groups being pushed well down the forward slope. Nothing could be done towards removing the dead, but food and blankets for the men were got up during the night. The officer in command of that part of the field made no attempt to see for himself how matters stood, nor would he permit the senior officers of the other battalions who

had companies in the front line to come and see the position for themselves.

Through the night the story of the fight on Wagon Hill filtered through. Early in the morning the working party had been surprised, the outposts being too close in to give adequate warning. Two officers of the Gordons and about twenty men were made prisoners and taken into a donga below the hill. Shortly afterwards Colonel Ian Hamilton was on the spot, and with a mixed lot of Royal Engineers, sailors, Highlanders, and Imperial Light Horse, drove the Boers off the hill and regained the gun entrenchment. Further reinforcements were sent up and fighting continued till about 1 p.m. when there was a lull. It was at this time that Commandant De Villiers, of the Harrismith Commando, with a handful of men made a dash at the gun entrenchment, and in the scrimmage Major Millar-Wallnut of the Gordons was killed. The rifle used by De Villiers, and with which he killed Miller-Wallnut, was a Martini-Henry marked "58th Regiment," evidently a trophy of the Boer War of 1881.

Under cover of the thunderstorm the Boers made another desperate effort to capture Wagon Hill which was only frustrated by the leading and example of Colonel Ian Hamilton, many of the officers and men having been fighting for twelve hours continuously after a night spent in entrenching. It was at this juncture that five companies of the Devons arrived, under Colonel Park,* who by a brilliant bayonet charge drove the Boers finally off the hill and into the valley below, thus enabling the officers and men who had been taken prisoners in the early morning to escape when the enemy retired at dusk. The losses of the garrison during the day were given as 425 killed and wounded, of which the Gordons lost two officers killed, two wounded, and 42 other ranks killed and wounded. Nothing could have been bolder than the enemy's

* Major-General Cecil William Park, C.B., A.D.C. (1856-1913). Commanded East Lancs. Division, 1910.



Tan Hoefen, Pictoria

BATTLEFIELD OF COLENZO

December 15, 1899

initial attacks on both ends of the position, or their assault towards evening on Wagon Hill.

The commandos engaged were those of Heidelberg and Harrismith, and according to the original plan other commandos were at the same time to have pushed in an attack on Observation Hill, on the north side of the town. This attack was not pressed but developed into a long-range-fire fight, which enabled Sir George White to draw troops from that part of the field and reinforce the southern defences. It was a hard day's fight, but happily the privations of the siege had not begun to sap the health and spirits of the troops, and the Boers learnt a lesson that prevented them from again attempting to take the town by assault. Had they done so after the middle of February the odds would have been heavily against us, the physical strength and endurance of the garrison having by that time deteriorated considerably.

The telephone office on Cæsar's Camp provided some amusement during the fight, one of the yarns being that an officer with his arm bandaged came into the shelter calling out, in a strong Irish brogue : " Operator, are you there ? " " Yes, sir," replied the operator. " Then, " said the officer, " take down this message : ' Mrs.— 49, Esplanade, Cove. Don't be anxious, darling, wound slight, left upper arm. Love and kisses to self, Rita and Ma.' Now read that, Orderly." The poor man later on had to pay £5 10s. for the excessive affection of his message.

Another telephone effort the next day ran as follows : " To O.C. Cæsar's Camp. The G.O.C. has left to visit you via Wagon Hill. He intends to resume former positions as soon as dead and wounded are buried."

Later on in the war a camp rumour was responsible for a message said to have been wired to Lord Roberts from the General at Barberton to the following effect : " Have captured forty engines, seventy wagons of stores, eighty women, all in good working order."

In a pocket of the Commandant of the Harrismith Commando a message from Joubert was found to the effect "that Ladysmith must be taken at all costs," and a gallant effort the two commandos made to carry out their general's orders.

On the evening of 7th January the battalion returned to camp, and at 10 o'clock that night those officers who were off duty, together with the sergeant-major and six sergeants went to take a last look at our chief, and then in the stillness of the night and in momentary expectation that the enemy's guns might disturb our sacred task, the little party, headed by the Adjutant carrying a lantern, escorted the mule-wagon bearing Colonel Dick-Cunyngham's coffin to the cemetery, where we laid the gallant soldier to rest. He died, as he would have wished, a soldier's death in the knowledge that the regiment he loved so well had once again proved true to the example he had set them.

From this time through the remaining two months of the siege life became more and more monotonous and uneventful. From certain points in the outpost line the progress of the fighting on the Tugela could be followed by the shell bursts which at times were clearly visible, as were also the movements of the enemy laagers.

On 17th January, for instance, a large number of Boer wagons were seen trekking away from the Tugela front towards Van Reenen's Pass. These incidents, and the rumours which increased in volume as time went on, coupled with the hard fact that little progress was being made by the relieving force, had a depressing effect on many whose physical endurance became affected by the confinement and insufficient food. Early in February the pickets on our section of the defences were strengthened, which gave credence to a rumour that Dr. Leyds had telegraphed to Kruger from Europe that Ladysmith must be taken.

The prevalent belief was that the attack would be made by Boers dressed up in British uniforms. Nothing, however,

happened, the Boers being possibly influenced by one of their native proverbs which runs : " God did not give the Boer life to be shot like a buck in the open," or more probably by the lesson they received on 6th January. About this time orders were issued for the formation of a flying column, consisting of a squadron from each of the cavalry regiments and the Imperial Light Horse, three batteries R.F.A., and four battalions, to be ready to move out should occasion require.

The shortage and bad quality of the available rations began to have a marked effect on the physical strength of the troops. Men who a month before thought nothing of the short march between our camp and the picket line now had to rest several times on the way up. If once a man's health began to weaken it was under the circumstances impossible for him to pick up again. Fortunately I was one of the lucky ones, and came through the ordeal unscathed, due mainly to the fact that I could eat any kind of food without turning against it. Many and weird were the shifts to which the garrison resorted to find variety from the everlasting flesh of trek-ox and horse. One day, when having tea at the Archdeacon's, the ladies of the house produced a most excellent cake, one of the ingredients we were told afterwards being machine oil. Violet powder was experimented with to make puddings but was not a success, whereas white starch, of which the mess was lucky enough to secure a quantity, not only was admirable for thickening the soup, but made a satisfying pudding little inferior to the blanc-mange shapes people are treated to at ball suppers.

Early in February the Boers started work on a scheme to dam the Klip River below the town which, had it been completed, might have flooded the low-lying defences, and certainly the neutral camp at Intombi where the sick and wounded lay. A man from Pietersburg was given the contract, and later on in the war when we occupied that town we, to some extent, paid off old scores by commandeering his piano for our mess. The work went

steadily on to the end of the siege, in spite of constant attention by our guns, but relief came before it was completed.

At last the day of our deliverance dawned. On 28th February, 1900, at midday, our old friend the 6-inch gun on Bulwana dropped a shell into the river only a few yards from our mess "dugout," where several officers were sitting at the time, and immediately afterwards the look-out man reported that he could see sheers rigged up over the gun. In spite of heavy shelling from all the guns that could be brought to bear the gun was taken safely away, to be encountered often again as the war progressed.

But the only thing that mattered was that the enemy were on the move, and word was passed that they could be seen retiring east and west of the town. At 3 p.m. a message was received from headquarters asking how many men were fit to march out seven miles and, if necessary, fight at the end of the march. A loud outburst of cheering came from the troops on Cæsar's Camp, and standing on our parapets by the river we caught sight of a column of mounted men winding their way towards the town across the Intombi flats. The cheers spreading over the whole town, intermingled with "God Save the Queen," marked the relief and satisfaction of all ranks that their efforts to keep the flag flying through 119 weary days had been crowned with success, and the enemy baulked of their prey.

We were amused to see in one of the newspapers which found its way into camp that Dr. Leyds had given out that on the surrender of the town the garrison would be sent to work on the mines, after the fashion of the ancient Romans.

On the following day the battalion formed part of a column which was pushed out after the retreating enemy, and engaged their rearguards with gun and long-range rifle fire. The thirteen miles covered by the troops that day taxed many to the utmost, nor have I ever understood why early that morning the mounted troops of the relieving force with some guns, double-horsed if



SIR GEORGE WHITE AND STAFF, LADYSMITH
1899

necessary, were not pushed out in pursuit, instead of a body of debilitated infantry.

On the 3rd March the relieving force marched through the town, the garrison lining the streets, which was the occasion of much cheering and recognition of old friends, while on the following day a thanksgiving service was held, the chaplains of all denominations assisting, and for this occasion casting aside those sectarian bonds which so often stand in the way of a united offering to the Almighty.

The dispersal of the garrison may be said to have taken place on 9th March, when Sir George White left on his way to England, the Gordons finding the guard of honour at the railway station, while every officer and man off duty put in an appearance to give our old chief a parting cheer. Shortly afterwards the brigade, consisting of the Devons, Manchesters, Rifle Brigade and ourselves, was sent to a spot called Arcadia, some miles towards Van Reenen's Pass, to refit and get into condition, our Volunteer company, made up of London Scottish and Aberdeenshire Volunteers, joining the battalion towards the end of the month.

Major-General Walter Kitchener* assumed the command of the brigade while we were at Arcadia, our Divisional General being Lieut.-General the Hon. Sir Neville Lyttelton.† About the middle of March we moved back again to Ladysmith, and encamped on the ridges north of the town.

The battalion having now recovered from the effects of the siege, and been brought up to strength by drafts from home, we bade farewell on 19th May to Ladysmith, marching for the last time through the town, which happened to be in a state of hilarious festivity due to the news of the relief of Mafeking, and

* Lieut.-General Sir Frederick Walter Kitchener, K.C.B. (1858-1912). Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Bermuda, 1908.

† General the Rt. Hon. Sir Neville Lyttelton, P.C., G.C.B., G.C.V.O. Commanded the Forces in South Africa, 1902-1904. Chief, Imperial General Staff, 1904-1908. General Officer Commanding the Forces in Ireland, 1908-1912. Governor, Chelsea Hospital.

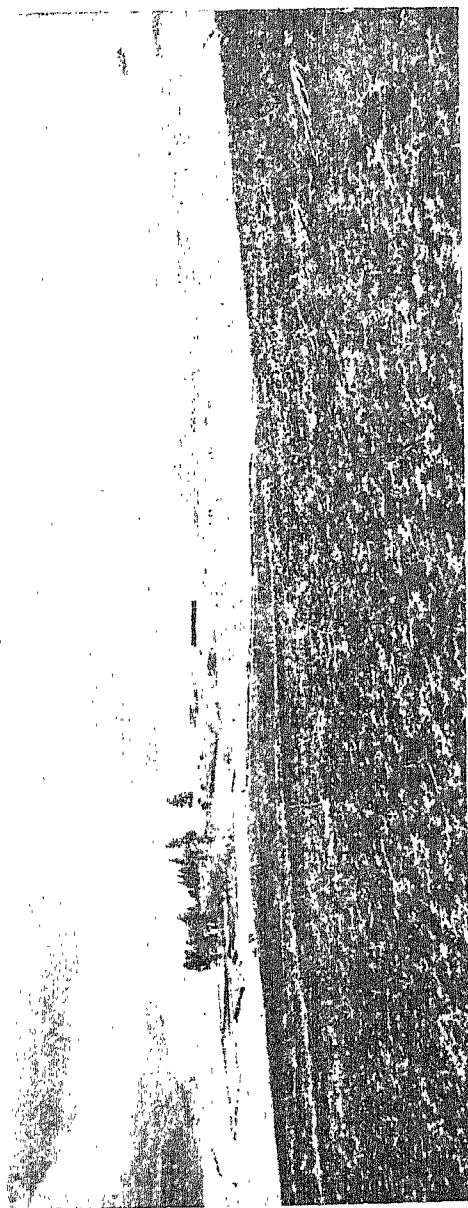
started on the way to join General Lyttelton's force at Ingagane. Here the battalion was transferred to the 8th (Howard's*) Brigade, and trekked along the Buffalo River towards Utrecht in pursuit of the elusive Boer. From a hill above the junction of the Buffalo and Ingogo rivers, where the battalion was entrenched for some days, a panorama magnificent in itself and full of sad, yet stirring memories unfolded itself. To the north and west the chain of the Drakensberg forms a background to Laing's Nek, above which tower on either side the massive outlines of Pulwani and Majuba of mournful memory. To the eastward the picture is framed by the rugged, inhospitable heights about Wakkerstroom, while in the foreground beyond the deep banks of the Ingogo River rise Mount Prospect and the Ingogo plateau.

No British soldier could gaze on the picture before him without a sigh of admiration for the gallant men who, on that February morning in 1881, gave their lives in the vain endeavour to redeem by devotion the hopeless situation in which they found themselves, nor without a stern determination to avenge the memory of that disastrous day. *The scene appealed more especially to us Gordons in that the regiment was one of those who had been involved in the catastrophe of Majuba.* More than once through the South African War, commencing with the fight at Elands-laagte, was the cry "Remember Majuba!" heard in our ranks when fighting was in progress.

Early in June the battalion rejoined the 7th (W. Kitchener's) Brigade at Newcastle, a particularly dirty town with no points of interest except a few broken-down houses enclosed in a ruined loopholed wall, which went under the name of Fort Amiel, and had been held and defended during the Zulu War of 1879.

For nearly two months we remained in and about Newcastle, building forts and entrenchments for the protection of the town

* Major-General Sir Francis Howard, K.C.B. Colonel-Commandant, Rifle Brigade.



MOUNT PROSPECT. O'NEILL'S FARM IN FOREGROUND
Where General Colley's camp was in 1881

and railway, with an occasional short trek in search of non-existent Boers reported by "the intelligent Kaffir," and of course the usual daily round of outpost duty, in which we became "past masters."

A good story filtered through about a Yeomanry sentry who bolted back to his picket, pursued, as he averred, by a large snake. On investigation the snake turned out to be the man's puttee, which, becoming unrolled, trailed along after him as he moved and was difficult to shake off!

On the 19th July the brigade joined Sir Redvers Buller's force at Sandspruit for a sweep through the Eastern Transvaal, in conjunction with an eastward movement from Pretoria under Sir John French, and from this date until 6th October, when Sir Redvers left for England, we marched, skirmished, and took part in various engagements without intermission.

The Gordons' Volunteer company, which had been in hard training since they joined the battalion after the siege of Ladysmith, were for the first time put into the firing line during a skirmish to the east of Meerzicht on 24th July, and acquitted themselves well, though from an excess of ardour suffering greater casualties than would have been the case with more experienced troops. From this time onwards our Volunteers took their full share of the work with the other companies of the battalion.

Having had a long experience of Volunteers in their native atmosphere, it was interesting to me to watch the development of this company into the finished article for war. They were picked men, keen to a degree, and physically of the highest standard, especially the half-company drawn from county battalions, but it required some four months, under the most favourable conditions for training, to develop that experience which is necessary to secure the best results from troops without unnecessary loss of life.

During the Great War, essentially a war of trench fighting, many persons, especially politicians, were seized with the idea that

a soldier could be made in a few weeks, an idea that I fear is still exploited, especially when votes are to be secured, by a cry of economy in our armed forces. The present-day Territorials, both in training and organization, are superior to the old Volunteers, but should in days to come our country find itself suddenly faced with war on a large scale, involving open as opposed to trench warfare, victory if achieved will only be secured by insufficiently trained and inexperienced troops at the cost of an enormous casualty list. Troops, even the often despised infantry, cannot be created in a day, or even in a few weeks, no matter how intelligent and physically perfect the material may be, an axiom it would be well if the public took to heart until such time as the League of Nations may wave wide its myrtle wand and strike "a universal peace through sea and land."

Amersfort was occupied on 7th August, Ermelo on 12th, and on 14th we reached the Vaalwater, as the upper reaches of the Komati River are called, whence communication was opened up with General French's forces on the Delagoa Railway.

On 26th August General French had attacked the right of a position Louis Botha had taken up at right angles to the Delagoa Railway with the view of checking the British advance. The following day General Buller attacked the enemy's left at Bergendal. The position was a strong one, the only advance on it being down the smooth open slope of a roller of the veldt. The weak point especially from the point of view of the Boer, who rarely neglected a safe line of retreat, was that the ground was equally open in rear of the position from which retreat would be costly, and ought to have been impossible. It was currently reported that the place was held by the Johannesburg Police, familiarly known as Z.A.R.P.S., a force which on this occasion did not belie its fighting qualities. After the fight a letter was found on the body of the Z.A.R.P. Commandant directing him to hold the position at all costs, and, as events proved, combined

resistance on a large scale ceased after the enemy's defeat on this line.

During the earlier part of the day the Gordons were in reserve. The position was hammered and battered by every available gun, and between 3 and 4 p.m. the Rifle Brigade and Inniskilling Fusiliers carried the centre of the position with the bayonet. Shortly afterwards we were ordered to attack the right, but almost immediately afterwards word came that the Boers were in full retreat, though very few of the garrison of the farmhouse and adjacent kopje escaped. It is difficult to understand why no attempt to pursue the broken enemy was made. The mounted troops had not been engaged, and the artillery horses had done little work during the day. The enemy on both flanks were in retreat, and had guns and mounted troops been pushed forward at once the enemy must have abandoned their guns and wagons on reaching the drift at Machardodorp. Some months afterwards a Boer told me that a 6-inch gun had been abandoned by his people about two miles from our outpost line, but finding that there was no pursuit some bolder spirits returned in the night and dragged it away.

At 7 a.m. the next day the Gordons started as advanced guard to the force, reaching early in the afternoon the high ground overlooking Machardodorp, from which wagons could be seen creeping up the steep hill beyond the drift. The hotel in the town was in working order, and we were told that President Steyn had only left the place that morning. Here we recovered three of our men who had missed their way in the dark on 21st August and had been taken prisoners.

From Machardodorp the column marched through the hilly country round Helvetia and through the Badfontein Valley to Lydenburg, where, on 8th September, in conjunction with a force under Sir Ian Hamilton from Belfast, the Boers were driven from a strong position on the Paardeplaatz heights, some six miles east of that town. It was during this engagement that our Volunteer

company was caught by a 6-inch shell, fired at a range of 12,000 yards, which killed and wounded twenty-one men. For distance and result this was probably the record shell effect of the war. The following day General Buller's force moved on in pursuit of the Boer rearguard through the rugged country of the Mauchsberg, viâ Pilgrim's Rest and Kruger's Post, returning to Lydenburg on 2nd October, where we bade adieu to our chief, who started on his return to England. The cheers as he rode past testified to our regret at his departure, though in looking back over the months we had served under his command it was impossible not to feel that had more vigour and dash been applied on occasions, notably after the fight at Bergendal, the results of the long trek would have been far greater.

On 23rd the 1st Bn. King's Royal Rifles and the 2nd Gordons proceeded to Pretoria by train to be present at the Proclamation of Annexation parade. A very short time after arrival at our camping ground, Lord and Lady Roberts paid an unexpected visit to the camp, all ranks turning out to cheer and welcome the Field-Marshal, whose name for long years had been a household word in the 2nd Gordons. The officers were introduced, the men forming a dense ring round the carriage to catch a glimpse of their Commander-in-Chief, who, before driving off, addressed a few words to the battalion to the following effect :—

“ Colonel Scott and men of the Gordon Highlanders, I have known this battalion well for many years, and the excellent work it has done for me in Afghanistan—where I specially applied for it—and here. I have had you specially brought up to be present at the Proclamation parade on the 25th.”

Finding that our tents had not arrived, Lord Roberts gave orders for us to use some empty tent lines belonging to the Guards near by, and also, which was even more important, an order on the Ordnance Department for an immediate issue of new clothes for the men. It is the remembrance of kindly words and acts like

these that endears a commander to those who serve him, and adds a halo of affection to the laurels with which his memory is crowned. Would that all who are called upon to exercise high command could be imbued with that human touch !

The Proclamation parade on 25th October was not a very exciting or impressive function, so far as our battalion was concerned. Two battalions of the Guards, the 1st King's Royal Rifles, the 2nd Gordons, and details from all corps at Pretoria formed up in the market square at 3-30 p.m. on 25th October, the Guards finding the guard of honour. From where we stood very little could be seen or heard. After the reading of the Proclamation decorations were distributed to officers and men who had gained them, the troops marched past the saluting base, and then doubled off down a side street, carrying away a fleeting impression of Lord Roberts, Lord Kitchener, the Royal Standard, a crowd, and a busy photographer perched up on one of the windows of the Grand Hotel. We had been under the impression for some time that this parade would mark the end of our service in South Africa, and that from Pretoria we should find ourselves en route for India. Any delusions of the kind were, however, soon set at rest by an order to escort some 400 ox-wagons to Rustenburg, which proved to be the beginning of a trek that occupied us until the middle of November, when we found ourselves strung out along the railway line north of Pretoria as far as Haman's Kraal.

For the next four months life was very monotonous, the time being taken up in entrenching the various posts held along the railway, outpost duties, and at Waterval North, looking after a small concentration camp of Boer families, pending their removal to a concentration camp at Irene. The number of lunatics among those bush veldt families was very marked, due, so they told me themselves, to the prevalence of inbreeding and incest ; nor was there any check on the propagation of feeble-minded offsprings.

Rumours of intended attacks by the enemy were as rife as ever,

though never materializing, but now and again interesting bits of information were gathered from Boers who had thrown in their lot with the British or from prisoners who passed through on their way to internment camps. One youth, who had been on Louis Botha's staff at Ladysmith, and had been sent up to Cæsar's Camp with a message during the attack on 6th January, 1900, told us that on that occasion a commando of 700 Boers who should have joined in the attack refused to move. He also told us that had Buller's troops not retired from Spion Kop Ladysmith could have been relieved the following day, and that if, when the relief of the town actually did occur, mounted troops had been sent at once in pursuit of the enemy every gun and wagon would probably have been abandoned. This information coincided with what was common opinion in Ladysmith at the time of the occurrence.

Towards the end of January, 1901, the battalion was concentrated at Piennaar's River, and on 29th March started off with a column under General Plumer* to occupy Pietersburg, which was reached by the mounted troops on 8th April, and by the infantry with the transport on 13th, the railway being repaired as we marched forward. Nothing exciting occurred during this trek, the main feature being the excellent staff work and the complete absence of fussiness and unnecessary alarms which are so wearing to troops. The distinction gained by our General years afterwards in the Great War could have been no surprise to anyone who had served under him, though many have wondered why he was not chosen for even higher responsibilities than those to which he attained.

The country we moved through had in years gone by been the scene of many bloody encounters between the old Voortrekkers and the natives who inhabit the Waterberg range, and traces still exist of the vengeance exacted by the Boers for the slaughter of

* Field-Marshal Lord Plumer, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O. Commanded 2nd Army, B.E.F., 1915-1918. Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Malta, 1919-1924.

their compatriots. To the north-west lay the Kaffir locations of the Makapan and Masibi tribes, miserable creatures infected with disease contracted while working in the mines, who show little evidence of the warlike prowess of their forbears. In the vicinity of Piet Potgieters Rust, where we remained a few days, was a farm belonging to Mrs. Theophilus Shepstone, daughter-in-law of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, who in 1877, on behalf of the British Government, carried out the annexation of the Transvaal, and was a prominent figure in the Boer War of 1881. Mrs. Shepstone, whose sons were serving under General Plumer, very kindly sent us butter and vegetables, and asked if we could let her have some English newspapers, because, as she put it, " she wanted to know what kind of bonnets old ladies like her were wearing ! "

Near one of the villages, Marabastadt, held by a detachment of the regiment to guard the railway, are the remains of a small entrenchment lying close under the berg which was defended by a company of the Connaught Rangers under Captain Brook* for ninety-two days during the Boer War of 1881. As one gazed down into the little earthwork from the berg it was difficult to imagine how the place could have been held for so long, even against men armed with the rifles of those days, and yet more extraordinary was the policy of isolating small detachments of troops in the wilderness beyond any hope of support. The Gordons remained at Pietersburg, finding detachments along the railway till the end of 1901, when they concentrated at Pretoria prior to embarkation for India.

Pietersburg was a pleasant enough station, on the high veldt, with more cultivation and trees than are usually found in Boer towns. The place was put into a thorough state of defence and used as a supply depot for the columns of mounted troops engaged in sweeping up the Northern Transvaal. The Boer general,

* Major-General Edmund Smith Brook, C.B. (1845-1910). Commanded Cape Colony District, 1904-1909.

Beyers, was for some time in the vicinity, and the usual rumours of projected attacks served to enliven the monotony, without, however, materializing. The mounted columns brought in Boer families to be passed down the line to concentration camps, many of them being of a low type, especially where inter-marriage with the natives had taken place. One paterfamilias arrived with two wives and the usual quiverful of children. He explained that he had divorced wife number one and married number two, whereupon number one had made difficulties about the provision for her children. To get over the difficulty he took number one back to his bosom, and the double menage apparently worked well !

CHAPTER V.

ON 4th June, 1901, orders were received from General Headquarters for me to proceed to Pretoria and report for temporary special duty, and on arrival there I found that I had been selected, through the good offices of my friend Colonel David Henderson,* to proceed to Zululand in charge of a small commission to investigate certain matters in dispute between the Acting High Commissioner and the Natal Government. Lord Milner having proceeded on leave of absence, Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief, was acting as High Commissioner, and in May of this year questions had been asked in the House of Commons regarding the alleged raiding of cattle by armed Zulus, under the direction of Lieut.-Colonel Bottomley, a Colonial officer, to which a reply had been read from Lord Kitchener to the effect that while armed Zulus should protect their own frontier and force any Boers entering Zululand to surrender to the nearest magistrate, this should be carried out under the direction of the Resident Magistrate, and that unarmed natives might be employed under the direct control of Colonel Bottomley or of his officers outside Zululand to collect and bring in cattle. Lord Kitchener added that the reports which were causing the trouble had mostly emanated from Boer sources, were not substantiated, and were much exaggerated.

As the Natal Government remained unsatisfied, it was suggested that a small commission should investigate and report on the whole matter, to which the Natal Government agreed. The

* Lieut.-General Sir David Henderson, K.C.B. (1862-1922). Colonel of the Highland Light Infantry. Director-General of Military Aeronautics from 1913. Director-General, League of Red Cross Societies, Geneva.

Commission consisted of Major Amber, of the Lancashire Fusiliers, Assistant Provost-Marshal in Natal, Major Karri-Davies, of the Imperial Light Horse, and myself as chairman, with Captain Hudson, of the Imperial Light Horse, in civil life a leading Johannesburg lawyer, as secretary. Colonel Bottomley accompanied the Commission in order to be present when evidence was being taken, and to ensure that the full facts in regard to his activities were brought to light. I spent some days at Pretoria reading up the correspondence that had passed on the subject at issue, and any books which I could lay hands on about the Zulus and their country, eventually getting under weigh for the south on 14th June and reaching Durban on the 19th. Travelling by train was not a pleasant experience in those days, the destruction of the line and the blowing up of trains by the enemy necessitating constant halts and long waits whenever half a dozen Boers were reported to be in the vicinity.

At the Tugela we said good-bye to the railway, forded the river, and organized our small commando on the northern bank to the usual accompaniment of kicking, squealing mules, who were strangers to each other and to their native drivers, who added to the babel. The cavalcade consisted of five officers, five soldier servants, a transport conductor, two interpreters, a clerk, eleven natives, twelve horses, twenty-two mules, two wagons with ox teams, and a four-wheeled light "spider." It was a glorious feeling to be one's own master, in a new country and amid surroundings and conditions far removed from the cut-and-dried routine of military life.

On the way up to Eschowe we met Mr. Saunders, the Chief Magistrate and Civil Commissioner of Zululand, who had done much throughout the war to restrain the Zulus from paying off old scores against the Boers, an able man who probably knew more about the Zulus than any other white official, but who was apparently inclined to resent interference, and whose strongly

worded effusions on the question of cattle-driving induced the Natal Government to take up an attitude in opposition to the policy of Lord Kitchener. It did not take long to find out that Colonel Bottomley, before commencing his cattle-driving operations, had neglected to pay his respects to the Chief Magistrate, a lapse of courtesy which undoubtedly helped to aggravate the tension, the official skin of a Colonial being as a rule very sensitive to irritation, especially at the hands of a brother colonist. At Eshowe the Commission stayed several days taking evidence, making inquiries as to the best route to the north, and enjoying the beauty of the semi-tropical vegetation that flourishes in this part of the country. Among those whose evidence was taken here by the Commission was Major-General Sir John Dartnell,* a fine old Indian Mutiny veteran, who was at this time commanding the Natal Volunteers and Mounted Police. It was he who had guided the Dundee column back to Ladysmith in October, 1899.

We had heard that there were troops at Eshowe, but did not see any. One day, however, one of the weirdest specimens of the British officer turned up at our camp. He belonged to some artillery militia corps, and evidently suffered from an excessive affection for strong drink. On asking him if he had any troops in the place he rather apologetically explained that he had fifteen men, of whom two were in gaol, two in hospital, and eleven drunk. Not a very useful commando! Later I represented the case, and the poor man was returned to England.

On the 1st July we started by the road leading to the Umvolosi River. The country was very beautiful, the road running along a ridge with deep wooded valleys on either side, the red and yellow cacti and "red-hot pokers" splashing with bright colours the varied green foliage. At the store near which we camped that night oranges, lemons and pineapples grew in profusion, the latter

* Major-General Sir John George Dartnell, K.C.B., C.M.G. (1838-1913). Served in Central India Field Force, 1857. Zulu War, 1870. Boer War, 1881.

to such an extent that they were used as common food for pigs. The boy and girl at the store were half-castes and reputed to be descendants of John Dunn, who was a power in the land in the 'seventies, and evidently added greatly to its population, as we constantly came across his reputed descendants. Game, too, was plentiful in this garden land, and on most days one of us added a buck or some birds—coran, wild goose or partridge—to the larder.

As we progressed away from civilization we came in touch with the Zulu in his native and comparatively unspoiled state, a very different type to the natives met with in the Transvaal. There is none of that cringing, deprecating manner in the Zulu which is so common among the dark races. Meeting him singly or in numbers, he will look you straight in the face, and, raising his arm, give you the Zulu salutation, "Inkosi," as one man to another. One reason of their superiority, so I heard, was that the chiefs discountenanced all attempts of the young men to go to work on the mines, and thus kept their country free from the scourge of disease that finds its origin where the world finds its wealth. The Zulus must indeed have been a superbly fine nation before they broke themselves against the strength of Britain, and to a soldier it is an enigma why no attempt has been made to recruit among them for service in our native Army.

On reaching the Umvolosi River on 5th July, after a long trek, the oxen struck work in the middle of the stream, and the wagons remained there till the next day, when we made a short trek, reaching the junction of the St. Lucia and Hlabisa roads. To the north of the Umvolosi the character of the country changes and the grass country begins. The previous year had been exceptionally wet, and as a result it had been impossible to burn the grass, which we found at times over our heads, and so tangled near the ground as to make it slow and difficult work to follow the track either on foot or horseback, or to get a shot at the game with which the country abounds.

During one of our halts word was brought in that a native hunt was to be held near by. From some rising ground we watched the men assembling in companies of about fifty each, old and young, dressed in every kind of garment, from the Zulu national costume of little in front and less behind, to ancient red British uniform coats, or black waterproofs and bowler hats. The arms were equally diverse, varying from hunting assegais and shields to dangerous-looking muzzle-loading guns, which were apt, we found afterwards, to go off suddenly, quite regardless of anyone being in the line of fire. Each company came up chanting their hunting songs to an accompaniment of rattling of arms and beating of shields. As they passed the Chief they raised their assegais and gave him the salute in one deep shout, "Inkosi," and then squatted down on the ground to await orders. A pack of mongrel dogs formed part of each impi. When they had all assembled the Chief called up one company after another, gave them their orders and sent them off yelling and brandishing their arms to their allotted work. The methods practised by the Zulus when hunting are identical with the manœuvres employed by them in war, and, it is said, originated from the way in which packs of wild dogs hunt down their prey. Bodies of men are sent right and left, strung out on a wide sweep, the leading men gradually converging towards each other till they meet; the main body moving slowly forward, keeping touch with the bases of the two horns.

Eventually the quarry is surrounded, and the circle gradually closes in upon its centre. After every drive each company collected itself, dashed past the Chief chanting the hunting song, and then sat down to rest and to discuss the drive. We took part in three of the drives, and were glad to escape with whole skins, for when a circle had closed on to a small diameter and the game were making frantic efforts to break through, assegais flew wildly through the air, and the old guns, loaded up to the muzzle with every sort of shot and scrap iron, went off at random, utterly

regardless of anything except an off-chance of bagging the game, added to which the noise was deafening, every Zulu yelling and screaming to the full capacity of his lung power. The men who took part in the hunt ranged from quite old men to children of seven or eight years of age, and, as I have said, were dressed in costumes which provided a comic element to the scene ; but even so, it helped to conjure up in one's imagination the stirring sight of the onslaught of Zulu war impis when the nation was at its zenith. Hlabisa—a pretty little outpost of the Empire, consisting of a magistrate's house, a court-house, gaol and store, nestling in a woody kloof, the name recalling the fact that it was here that Cetewayo kept his slaughter cattle—was reached on the 7th July, and more evidence taken.

Our methods of recording evidence would doubtless have shocked the soul of a Whitehall official, for it had to be taken when and where it could be found. When we were lucky enough to find a witness at a station the Commission sat in state in the court-house, but there were occasions when a witness was run to earth in the open country, and then the official business was transacted just wherever we might at the moment be.

Among the individuals we came across were several interesting personalities, men who had thrown in their lot with the country and its natives. To mention one case : hearing one night that a white man in charge of a gang of natives was camped near by, I sent word over and asked him to come and dine, thinking we might get some news and information. A short, thick-set man whose hair was turning grey appeared, and I was at once struck by the wonderfully pure English he spoke, due, I discovered later, to the fact that he rarely spoke the language or associated with white men, and thus avoided the slang terms and clipping of words which to-day mar our native tongue. He was the son of a land surveyor in Natal, and being of a roving disposition, wandered as a youth into Zululand and attached himself to Cetewayo, with whom he

remained until the Zulu War of 1879. He then joined the British forces and acted as transport rider to Colonel Pearson's column. After the war he attached himself to Usibepu, who had been Cetewayo's chief induna, becoming his friend and adviser, and adopting Zulu methods of life, including a considerable number of native wives. In 1888 Dinizulu, the son of Cetewayo, attacked Usibepu, calling in the assistance of a body of Boers under Lucas Meyer, with promises of grants of land in the Vryheid district, and a battle took place at M'Kusi Poort, in which Usibepu was worsted. Dinizulu was then banished, and peace being restored by the British Government who took steps to ensure that inter-tribal fighting should cease, my Englishman's occupation was gone, and while still retaining his kraal and domestic arrangements in Usibepu's country he accepted work under the Natal Public Works Department, and was supervising a gang of natives repairing roads when I came across him. A curious life, and yet if the man was taken to task he no doubt would reply in the sense of A. L. Gordon's lines—

I'd live the same life over if I had to live again,
And the chances are I go where most men go.

Taking two horses each and the four-wheeled " spider " drawn by eight mules, with two soldier grooms and five natives, we started on the afternoon of the 9th July from Hlabisa, reaching Zedeni that evening. Zedeni was just a store and farmhouse on a bleak-looking hill. The owner, a white man, lived there quite alone with his dogs, his wife having died a few years previously. When we walked in he was busy cutting up some nasty-looking stuff on the kitchen table, which he explained was the lung of a cow that had died of lung disease, from which he was extracting serum for inoculation purposes. He was evidently glad to see some strange faces, and after wiping his hands on his trousers made us some excellent coffee. I was told that this man was quite well off, and could well have afforded to have settled

regardless of anything except an off-chance of bagging the game, added to which the noise was deafening, every Zulu yelling and screaming to the full capacity of his lung power. The men who took part in the hunt ranged from quite old men to children of seven or eight years of age, and, as I have said, were dressed in costumes which provided a comic element to the scene ; but even so, it helped to conjure up in one's imagination the stirring sight of the onslaught of Zulu war impis when the nation was at its zenith. Hlabisa—a pretty little outpost of the Empire, consisting of a magistrate's house, a court-house, gaol and store, nestling in a woody kloof, the name recalling the fact that it was here that Cetewayo kept his slaughter cattle—was reached on the 7th July, and more evidence taken.

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himself comfortably in some civilized spot. But no, there he remained, apparently perfectly content, with his dogs and native servants, rarely seeing a white face.

On the evening of the next day we reached Usibepu's principal kraal, Banganomo, with its two circular fences, between which were the huts, the cattle being inside the inner one. The old Chief was away, but one of his sons came to pay his respects, and sent us forage for the animals, and butter and eggs for ourselves, for which we paid a good price, the Zulu not being without a touch of the Israelite when it is a question of buying and selling.

The country in this part is not interesting, being hilly and open, like the high veldt of the Transvaal, while to the north of Banganomo, in the valley of the M'Kusi, it becomes flat and is covered with sickly looking bush, in which the so-called " fever trees " abound, gaunt, tall, sulphur-coloured trees, with a shiny bark that looks spectral in the sunlight. We pushed through this fever-stricken belt as rapidly as possible, emerging at M'Kusi Poort, where the river cuts through a narrow gorge in the Ubombo range, which rises to a height of 1,200 feet in tumbled masses of bare crag jutting out from a tangle of brushwood and well-grown trees.

It was here that the battle between Dinizulu, aided by his Boer allies, and Usibepu took place. Usibepu's men were crouching in the brushwood up the pass awaiting the signal to charge when the Boers should have dismounted to water their horses. Unfortunately the accidental discharge of a gun by one of Usibepu's men gave the alarm to the Boers, and with their assistance Dinizulu won the day driving Usibepu through the gorge into the low country to eastward. There is a tradition that this gorge was the burial place of the chiefs of tribes who inhabited the land before it was conquered by the Zulus and that the bodies are seated, dressed in full war panoply, round a cave high up on the side of the hill. Every year natives from Togoland, descendants of the

original tribes, deposit a bullock and other sacrificial oblations at the mouth of the cave.

The story goes on to relate that once a native penetrated into the cave and took an assegai from one of the kingly skeletons. When this man went hunting the assegai never failed to kill the animal at which it was hurled, but whoever ate the flesh of an animal killed by it, died. So the native returned the charmed assegai to its ghostly owner in the cave. Attempts have since been made to penetrate into the cave, but the traces of black mamber, the most deadly of South African snakes, are so numerous as to hardly justify the risk. The local natives declare that at certain times the hillside is lit up by mysterious lights, a statement confirmed by the local magistrate who told me that he had seen them. Whether these tales be true or not, the place is wildly and mysteriously beautiful, a fitting stage on which to weave scenes worthy of the pen of a Rider Haggard.

Climbing the 1,800 feet to the magistracy we saw the flutter of petticoats on the tennis court, and somewhat to our surprise in this isolated eyrie fifty miles from the nearest white woman and a hundred and forty miles from the railway, found two ladies, the wife and governess of the magistrate, playing tennis.

From the Ubombo magistracy we made for Ingwavuma through a difficult country where the long grass swallowed up horsemen and spider, the ground covered with large stones hidden in the tangled growth making progress slow and difficult. A short halt was made on the banks of the Pongola, a beautiful stream which though where we forded it only about the breadth of the Thames at Richmond must be a mighty river when in flood. At a kraal belonging to Chief Samban we picked up a couple of guides, the track having become quite obliterated in the long grass, and on 13th July, after negotiating the four parallel ridges of the Ubombo Mountains, on each of which our guides swore the magistracy was situated, reached Ingwavuma, the most northerly

point of our expedition. Ingwavuma consisted of the usual magistrate's house, a few native police huts, and a store kept by a Portuguese whose original name was Fenetti, but who on applying to become a naturalized British subject and being asked by some wag if he would prefer to be English, Scotch, or Irish, chose the latter, consequently became known as The O'Fenetti. The place is some 1,500 feet above sea level, the mountains falling almost precipitously into Swaziland, which was spread out as if on a map at our feet. The view as the sun set was superb. During our two days' stay at Ingwavuma the local induna, or chief, came with some followers to pay his respects, the magistrate having apparently let it be known that the members of the Commission were "indunas" sent by the great White King to see how the natives were getting on. I gave the deputation some chocolates in silver paper, and some apricot jam which the Chief ladled out with a bit of stick into his followers' hands, one of them informing us through the interpreter that "a man would leave his mother for that food!"

Having collected all the evidence possible bearing on the inquiry we turned our faces southward, and started on the return trek on 15th July. The start was marked by a stroke of bad luck. The driver of the spider turned too sharply as he whipped up his eight mules and snapped the fore axle. Happily we were able to borrow a light wagon from the magistrate, but I felt that the unlucky driver had let me in for an interminable correspondence with Army paymasters and auditors, extending possibly over many years, to determine on whose shoulders payment for the derelict spider should fall. It might even eventually engage the attention of a Select Committee of the House of Commons!

On the homeward trek some of us got a couple of days' shooting on the Ubombo flats, where herds of wildebeest and quagga still roamed in their native wildness. At Nongoma the old Zulu Chief Usibepu came in to give evidence, a stolid-looking, thick-set

old Zulu, who unfortunately had dressed himself up in a mustard-coloured flannel suit which did not enhance his dignity or appearance. Dinizulu, the son of Cetewayo, could not or would not attend, but sent two of his head indunas, splendid-looking old men magnificently limbed, and fully six feet in height. It was an interesting experience to meet these fine old veterans who in days gone by had led the impis that hurled themselves against British bayonets. At the junction of the Eshowe and Melmoth roads we were met by fresh horses that had been wired for to replace those which had died from that curse of South Africa—horse sickness. Here we turned off towards Melmoth, where a couple of days was spent in taking more evidence, and on 30th July we were back again at Eshowe, having covered some 530 miles since we started from that place at the beginning of the month.

The Commission reached Durban on 2nd August, and the following week was spent in sifting the evidence we had collected, and drafting a report on which it was not easy to secure unanimity owing to the somewhat biased attitude of our Colonial member. However, by the 10th August I was able to start off to Pretoria and in due course handed in the result of our labours, which apparently gave satisfaction in view of the fact that shortly afterwards I was selected for further extra regimental duty. The month I spent in Zululand was not only a pleasant break in the monotony of the war, but was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life, and I have been ever grateful to my old friend David Henderson for having given me the opportunity of putting my foot on what eventually proved to be the first rung of the ladder that led to such success as I have been able to achieve in life.

On the 24th August, 1901, I rejoined my regiment, taking up duty as Commandant of the post at Piet Potgeiter's Rust. The Boers at this time were very active in blowing up trains, the thick bush along the Pretoria Pietersburg line affording every facility to get the booty away before help could arrive. On 7th September

it was decided to blockhouse the line and to clear away the bush on either side, work which was carried out by gangs of natives working under the protection and supervision of the troops. This precaution had the effect of practically putting an end to the blowing up of trains, much to the relief of the "tame Boers" who were detailed to accompany each train.

My regimental soldiering came to an end on 13th October, when I handed over my post and started for Pretoria to report myself at General Headquarters. At that time I had no idea that this was to be a final severance from the regiment to which it had been my pride to belong through the past twenty years, and which I hoped one day to command. But so it proved, and from a personal point of view fortunately so for me, because as it afterwards transpired I could not have succeeded to the command of a battalion until I had reached the age of forty-nine and a half years, an age at which a man should reasonably expect to be qualified for higher responsibilities.

Owing to the filtration of recruits, arms, ammunition and intelligence to the enemy through the Cape ports, and in a lesser degree to various scandals, of which the state of affairs at the Mount Nelson Hotel, Capetown, was the most glaring, Lord Kitchener decided to place the three ports of Capetown, Port Elizabeth, and East London under martial law in charge of a Provost-Marshal, who through subordinates at each port would regulate the three places under an identical system, and had selected me for this appointment. The scheme, however, was opposed by Sir Gordon Sprigg, the Prime Minister of Cape Colony, who during a visit to Pretoria induced Lord Kitchener to modify the original idea to the extent that each town should be administered separately. I do not know what the political argument against the original scheme may have been, but from the point of view of military efficiency and of the credit of the British Army it was unfortunate that it was not adhered to. To-day, thanks to the experience gained in the Great

War, there are many officers highly trained in Provost duties, and the value of that branch of the Administrative Staff of the Army is recognized, but in the days of the South African War ideas on the subject were vague in the extreme, extending little beyond the arrest of soldiers for breaches of discipline, and the custody of prisoners of war.

At this time a great deal was heard of the scandals at the Mount Nelson Hotel at Capetown which were siezed upon in some quarters to vilify the British officer, a state of affairs which could never have occurred had a strong Provost-Marshal, who knew his work, been in charge of the town, hampered though he assuredly would have been by the numbers of the fair sex who were allowed to come out to South Africa. When the original scheme fell through I was asked if I would take up the appointment of Assistant Provost-Marshal at Port Elizabeth, and by keeping in close touch with my opposite number at East London ensure an identical system of martial law at the two places. I accepted the post thinking that the experience I had gained in Egypt of similar work might prove of some use, though the actual position was hardly one which under ordinary circumstances would have offered an inducement to leave the regiment.

There was plenty of work to be done during the two months I spent at Port Elizabeth, the most important point requiring attention being the strict administration of the permit system to check the entry into the country of recruits for the enemy forces. A Boer recruiting agency existed in America whence men were shipped under the guise of cattlemen in boats bringing animals to South Africa, where they slipped ashore and either joined the nearest Boer commando, or enlisted in one of the British irregular corps with the intention of deserting with their arms and ammunition on the first favourable opportunity. This was very soon put a stop to in collaboration with the Harbour Board, who, although at first somewhat touchy at what seemed to them an interference with

their prerogative, soon settled down to an amicable working arrangement.

Another factor which had directly contributed to the infiltration of undesirable persons through the ports was the indiscriminate wearing of cast-off uniform by natives, especially those, curiously enough, employed by army departments. A man having slipped ashore could for a few shillings purchase articles of uniform from a native in which he would pass for a Colonial irregular on leave from the front, and thus without much difficulty find his way out of the town. This was remedied by the police at once burning any articles of uniform found on natives, or in houses during domiciliary visits.

The number of rifles and bandoliers full of ammunition found in houses, especially those inhabited by women of easy virtue, was extraordinary, resulting from visits to the coast by men on leave from the front, mostly those of Colonial corps, as the British regular soldier was not given leave of absence, and, even had that been the case, could not have afforded the trip on the rates of pay then existing. A number of Boer prisoners who were on parole in and about the town, under little or no supervision, were inclined to feel aggrieved at an order directing them to report daily and sign a book in the Provost-Marshal's office, a very necessary measure in view of the fact that many of the leading men in Port Elizabeth were Germans who, if not actively hostile to us, would not have been averse to do a good turn to our enemies.

The local pressmen were, of course, somewhat excited at the imposition of martial law, especially when the press censor got to work, but they soon settled down peacefully to the inevitable, as did the publicans, who did not enthuse over the restrictions it was necessary to enforce on the sale of liquor to natives. But, taking everything into consideration, I do not think that the good people of Port Elizabeth, at all events those who hoped for a successful issue to the war, had many grounds of complaint on account of

unnecessary or undue interference with their liberty, while the measures that were enforced, and which had been far too long delayed, were but the logical result of a state of war.

On 14th December, 1901, Major Quentin Agnew,* Royal Scots Fusiliers, arrived to relieve me, and a few days later I left for Pretoria, where I received orders to report myself for duty as Chief Staff Officer to Major-General Mildmay Willson,† commanding the district west of Johannesburg.

General Willson's headquarters were at this time at Krugersdorp, the command extending to Klerksdorp and the Orange Free State border in the south and the country to some distance east and west of that stretch of railway line, sub-district commands being established at Krugersdorp, Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp. From the railway a system of blockhouse lines was pushed out on either side to restrict the movements of the enemy, and to assist the mobile columns engaged in driving the country. The principal duties of the command were to preserve the railway line intact, prevent any enemy movement across or near it, and to assist the mobile columns working over the open country in every possible way. Thanks to the help and forbearance of my General, who was one of the most charming personalities it has ever been my fortune to come in touch with, I was able to pick up the work, which was entirely new to me, without attracting too much attention at General Headquarters, from which fact it may be assumed that the machine worked smoothly. Work in office, varied with visits to places down the line, and such recreation as could be fitted in made up the usual routine. Now and again Lord Kitchener would suddenly appear on a flying visit, especially when a disaster had overtaken one of the mobile columns, and at any moment a column might come in to refit and hand over its prisoners.

* Colonel Quentin Agnew, D.S.O., M.V.O. Royal Bodyguard (Gentlemen-at-Arms).

† Major-General Sir Mildmay Willson, K.C.B. (1847-1912). Scots Guards.

About the middle of March, 1902, it was decided to move our Headquarters to Klerksdorp, where on the evening of 7th April General Willson received Louis Botha and nine members of the Transvaal Government, while two days later Steyn, Delarey, De Wet, Olivier, and several other Boer commandants and staff officers arrived to discuss the terms of surrender.

It was intensely interesting at last to come face to face with men against whom we had been fighting for two-and-a-half years, whose names had become household words throughout the Army. Without doubt Louis Botha was the most striking personality of them all. Tall, strongly knit, with close-cut black beard and moustache, dressed in khaki-coloured jacket and breeches, and wearing a strip of vierkleur-coloured ribbon—orange, white and green—on his left breast, he could not be mistaken for other than he then was, and since proved himself to be, a leader of men. Beside him, Lucas Meyer, stout, tall, and powerfully built, with bald head and long grey beard; Shalk Burgher, small and ferret-looking; De Wet, very stout and sullen-faced; Hertzog, slight, dark and spectacled, were ordinary types such as would pass unnoticed in any assembly of South African Dutch. Steyn, the President of the Free State, a large, heavy man, weighing some nineteen stone, seemed in feeble health, and with difficulty dismounted from his carriage. He was dressed in a suit made out of Jäger blankets. Delarey struck me as a type quite apart from the rest of the Boer delegates. The first time I saw his swarthy, aquiline face, lit up by beady, black eyes, my thoughts involuntarily reverted to the Bedouin sheiks I had come across in Syria and Egypt—the likeness was startling. No doubt in his Spanish ancestry is mingled the blood of some soldier of the Crescent.

In the evenings, when going round to see if anything could be done for the comfort of the delegates, one had the opportunity of chatting with them, and discussing various incidents of the war in which we were mutually engaged, and from Lucas Meyer I had an

interesting account of his activities in Zululand in days gone by, which confirmed much that I had heard during my wanderings in those parts. They were all inclined to be friendly, and bore no animosity against the British soldier, though very bitter against South African Colonials, and more so against the "tame Boers" who had been fighting for us. The one man among them to maintain a sullen, bitter attitude was De Wet, and, as events have since shown, he proved irreconcilable to the end. They certainly had no reason to be ungrateful to the British Government, for on looking over the transport which they brought in with them I noticed that both mules and harness were all plainly marked with the Government broad arrow. Spoils of war!

On 11th April the delegates went off in two trains to Pretoria to discuss the terms of peace, some of them—Steyn, Schalk Burgher, Delarey and Ferriera among others—returning on 19th. The remainder went from Pretoria direct to points on the railway nearest to their commandos. The war in the meantime went merrily on, the activities of the mobile columns in the Western Transvaal being directed by Sir Ian Hamilton, who organized combined drives on a larger scale than had been attempted in that part of the country up to date.

In the meantime arrangements were being made at Vereeniging for the conference which was to decide for peace or continued war, and on 13th May the first of the Boer delegates in the Western Transvaal, Commandant Liebenburg, rode into Klerksdorp, followed the next day by Steyn, Du Toit, Tolly de Beers, and several others. Steyn looked in even worse health than when he came in a month previously, and evidently was suffering greatly from his eyes. They all went off to Vereeniging in special trains on the night of 14th May.

On 1st June a wire came from the Commander-in-Chief to say that peace had been signed the night before.

It was with feelings of relief rather than of elation

that we welcomed the end of the long-drawn-out struggle, little thinking that before many years had passed we should be engaged in a struggle beside which the South African War would fade into insignificance, and in which our late enemies would be fighting under the British flag. Nor could we then foresee that the experiences and lessons of the South African War, especially during the earlier days, contributed in no small degree to the creation of those unsurpassed troops, the "Old Contemptibles" of 1914.

When peace was declared I had the gratification of feeling that I had gone through the war, from the first day to the last, without being a day off duty—a very satisfactory record.

The cessation of hostilities increased rather than diminished the work that had to be done, such as sending off selected parties of officers and men to England for the Coronation ceremony of King Edward, collecting scattered units on the railway line, and arranging for the surrender of the Boer commandos within the area. The largest was Liebenburg's commando, who surrendered to General Kekewich* at Reit Kuil, some 490 men and horses, all looking fit and in good condition. Having surrendered their arms, the men were free to go to their homes, taking their horses with them.

In all, 4,884 Boers laid down their arms in General Willson's district. They were generally friendly, and some of them interestingly communicative on the events of the war. For instance, Commandants Liebenburg and Woolmaraans were emphatic that if the Boer women and children had not been brought into concentration camps the war would have been shortened by six to twelve months, an opinion which I fancy was shared by most soldiers. Whatever may be urged on humanitarian grounds in favour of that policy, the fact remains that the

* Major-General Robert George Kekewich, C.B. (1854-1914). Colonel, The Buffs. Defended Kimberley in South African War for 126 days.



GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA DURING SOUTH AFRICAN WAR
Ian H. Fraser, Pretoria

concentration camps are still a bitter memory among the Boers, while many valuable lives on both sides were sacrificed during the prolongation of hostilities due to their existence. War is a relic of barbarism, which no one desires less than soldiers who have seen and experienced its horrors, but if once entered upon the methods employed should be those which will ensure a swift decision. The nation that refuses to avail itself of every expedient and of every instrument which modern science may place at its disposal, may not only lay itself open to defeat, but even if in the end victorious, will be responsible for lives which have been sacrificed from a mistaken idea of humanity.

In the middle of June, 1902, I received a telegram to go to Pretoria to see Lord Milner, the High Commissioner, at once. On arrival I went to Army Headquarters to find out what it was all about, and while talking to one of the Staff, Lord Kitchener came into the room and told me that my name had been sent in for a post of Civil Commissioner, advising me at the same time to accept it. In the evening I saw Lord Milner, who seemed very vague as to what these civil appointments might lead to, and, on my asking for forty-eight hours to consider the proposal, made it plain to me that he preferred men who were not troubled with doubts as to their acceptance of the offer. So I returned to my work at Klerksdorp, having had, as was afterwards proved, a most fortunate escape. A considerable number of officers accepted these Civil Commissionerships, only to find themselves in a few years thrown out to make way for Boer nominees, when self-government was conferred on the South African Colonies.

In the meantime the work of demobilizing the Army went rapidly forward. Hardly a day passed that some friend or acquaintance did not put in an appearance on his way home, and on 1st July General Willson handed over the remains of his command to Colonel Thorneycroft,* who in turn handed over to

* Major-General A. W. Thorneycroft, C.B. (1850-1913).

Colonel S. Monro* a fortnight later. The changes were truly kaleidoscopic, and were calculated to make one envy the lucky individuals who had managed to secure soft jobs at home. At this time the outlook from a personal point of view was anything but cheerful, promising, so far as I could see, nothing better than a monotonous existence for several years as a subordinate Staff officer of a small garrison in the Western Transvaal, so I determined to apply to be allowed to return to regimental duty. I was on the point of doing so when a telegram was received appointing me temporarily Assistant Adjutant-General and Chief Staff Officer of Cape Colony, piece of good fortune for which I was indebted to my former divisional commander, Lieut.-General the Hon. Sir Neville Lyttelton, at that time commanding the forces in South Africa.

On arrival at Capetown early in October, 1902, I had little idea that for four years I should make my home under the shadow of Table Mountain, everything being in that state of uncertainty which invariably follows a war, before the authorities are able to decide upon a settled policy. Fortune, however, was very kind to me, for in November, 1903, my appointment was confirmed, and I was in consequence promoted to the rank of substantive colonel in the Army.

I had been told by men who had been quartered at the Cape before the war that for genial society, both British and Dutch, and for economical living it was an ideal station. The war unfortunately had worked changes in both respects. Many good friends and much kindly hospitality were to be found, but the Dutch element to a great extent had withdrawn itself from association with the garrison, and certainly the expenses of living were considerable. Still, after three years' life in the field or in veldt dorps, it was pleasant to return to a civilized existence in the beautiful

* Brigadier-General Seymour Charles Monro, C.B. (1856-1906). Seaforth Highlanders.

peninsula overshadowed by Table Mountain, so full of historical memories and associations. Soon after my arrival I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of that fine old South African politician, John X. Merriman, with whom, on several Sunday mornings, I climbed the mountain and sat looking over the country spread out below us, listening as he unfolded the story of the various places within view where history had been made.

For the first two years the work was fairly strenuous, shipping off the surplus troops to England and the Colonies, demobilizing the local forces, and, worst of all, settling up claims for damages and loss incidental to the war, most of which was thrown on the shoulders of the General commanding Cape Colony. Happily Sir Henry Settle,* our G.O.C., was a tiger for work, and having at one time held an appointment in the War Office, an invaluable experience, was able to appreciate at their proper value the financial fulminations that poured in, penned as often as not by officials who, from ignorance or excess of zeal, ignored the conditions under which accounting is possible on active service, especially when dealing with irregular or Colonial units. The Imperial Yeomanry, and the cadres of certain irregular corps had been brought to Stellenbosch and kept there until a reasonable settlement had been effected, sometimes only by the threat of a court-martial on the responsible officer.

It was weary worrying work, and as both Staff officers and heads of departments were war-worn and tired, it was not to be wondered at that several broke down under the strain before normal conditions were reached. The climate of the peninsula, too, is enervating and depressing, and not helpful for coping with the strain of arduous work. Whether this is due to the cloud-capped mountain overshadowing the town, or to other causes, I do not know, but when discussing the matter one day with the

* Lieut-General Sir Henry Hamilton Settle, K.C.B. (1847-1922). Colonel-Commandant, R.E.

manager of a large bank he told me that he had found that it was always advisable to send his clerks to an up-country branch after two years' heavy work in Capetown.

Pleasant in comparison to the office grind were trips to Middleburg where the majority of the troops were stationed, or to Kimberley or Mafeking which were both in the command, the Staff rides in various parts of the country, and occasional manœuvres in conjunction with the troops in the Orange River Colony.

Towards the end of 1902 an incident occurred which marked the beginning of an association which lasted for many years of my life. A telegram was received at the office to the effect that a mutiny had occurred at Stellenbosch, and two men had been shot. Taking an early train to the place, I was met by a young officer who explained that he was the adjutant of the camp, the commandant being away, and that some tradesmen who had been enlisted for one year and had become discontented at being kept at Stellenbosch awaiting embarkation, having procured some rifles and ammunition had begun firing promiscuously from the windows of the hut in which they were living. Second-Lieut. Childs,* the officer to whom I was talking, had at once on his own responsibility turned out the camp guard, attacked the hut, killed two of the malcontents and placed the others under arrest, thus putting a stop to what might have developed into a serious disturbance, the camp at that time being full of untrained, undisciplined men of the kind that invariably find their way to a theatre of war when hostilities are prolonged to the exhaustion of the nation's preparedness for war. I made a mental note of the initiative and resourcefulness displayed by this young officer, and a few months later was able to offer him the appointment of Garrison Adjutant of Capetown, a position in which, as in many others since those days, he more than justified my anticipations.

* Major-General Sir Borlase Wyndham Childs, K.C.M.G., K.B.E., C.B. Director of Personal Services and Deputy Adjutant-General, War Office, 1916-1921. Now Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.

In the autumn of 1903 I was lucky enough to get six months' leave, which I was glad of after five-and-a-half years' continuous work. On my return I found that Sir Henry Settle had handed over the command of Cape Colony to Major-General Miles,* who only remained a short time, being appointed to a Directorate in the War Office in May, 1904, and was replaced at the Cape by Major-General E. S. Brook.

In 1905 I had the opportunity of going to Delagoa Bay, towards which I had looked longingly from the Ubombo Mountains during my trip through Zululand.

Lorenzo Marques was a clean, well-laid-out town, the hotel comfortable enough, and the food quite good, while the climate at midsummer was cooler and less damp than Durban. It was common talk in the Army during the war that Mr. Gladstone, when Prime Minister, had been offered the opportunity of purchasing Delagoa Bay from the Portuguese for a comparatively trifling sum. Whether this is a fact or not, what a difference it would have made had we been in possession of the place during the war! Indeed it is doubtful if in that case Kruger would have risked an appeal to arms.

In the summer of 1905 some excitement was worked up in the Cape over events in German South-West Africa, and the movements of Von Jacob, the German Consul-General in Capetown, who made several trips to Port Nolloth and the border. Fighting was reported between the Germans and the Koranna tribes, and our Intelligence Staff were kept busy for a time, till all fear of an incursion into Cape Colony had subsided.

In the summer of 1906, under Mr. Haldane's† scheme for the creation of a General Staff, Colonel Altham‡ arrived as General

* Lieut.-General Sir Herbert Miles, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.B.E. Colonel, Royal Munster Fusiliers. Quartermaster-General to the Forces, 1908-1912. Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Gibraltar, 1913-1918.

† Viscount Haldane of Cloan, K.T., O.M. Secretary of State of War, 1905-1912. Lord Chancellor, 1912-1915 and 1924.

‡ Lieut.-General Sir Edward Altham, K.C.B., K.C.I.E. Colonel, The Royal Scots.

Staff Officer of the Cape Colony Staff, and I took up the duties of Assistant Quartermaster-General. One of the wisest things ever done was, in my opinion, the abolition of the appointment of Chief Staff Officers of commands. I have personally never met with a man who combines the knowledge necessary to master the details of what is termed the General Staff side, as well as the administrative side of the Staff. Even if there be such a man, he would not have the time in a big command to ensure the accurate working of the various divisions of the Staff for which he would be responsible. It may be argued that a General Officer must equally have an expert knowledge of all branches of the Staff under his command. True, he must have a working knowledge to enable him to give decisions on points brought forward by his Staff, but the accurate presentment of a case devolves on the Staff officer whose department has dealt with it, and who from personal knowledge must be satisfied that no point of detail has been overlooked. Of late years there has been a tendency to urge the revival of the appointment of Chief Staff Officers, a contingency which, for the sake of the efficiency of the Army and for the professional credit of General Officers of the future, I hope may never materialize.

Returning from the office by train one evening in the middle of June, 1906, to my house at Wynberg I met the Mayor of Cape-town, who seized me by the hand and poured out his congratulations, much to my astonishment as I was at a loss to know what it was all about. He then produced an evening paper from which I learned that I had been made a Companion of the Bath in the Birthday Honours list. The period of my appointment was now rapidly drawing to an end, and on 17th September, 1906, I steamed out of Table Bay, closing my South African experience of seven years of war and peace. On the voyage home the ship touched at St. Helena, affording an opportunity to visit the last earthly residence of the greatest soldier of all time. The island was included in the Cape Colony Command, a fact which, both before

and during the war, gave opportunities for occasional pleasant sea trips at the expense of the Government to the Generals and Staff of the Command. During the day I spent at St. Helena orders were received for the early removal of all troops and stores, the place being no longer required as a military station.

CHAPTER VI.

MY first acquaintance with the War Office was in February, 1907, when I took up an appointment as Assistant Adjutant-General in the office of the Director of Personal Services. As a rule, the title of a Government department conveys some indication of the work carried on therein, but, from the number of times I have been asked what the term "personal services" might imply, it is evident that the originator of the title succeeded in adding to the mystery which is popularly supposed to hang over the activities of the often-abused War Office. As a matter of fact, the work of the directorate was so varied and widespread as to make it absorbingly interesting, far more so than that of departments which are confined to one particular line of work. Discipline, both of officers and men, ceremonial, education, questions of law and the use of troops in aid of civil power, together with the task of safeguarding the interests of officers and men from the depredations of the civilian financial branches, which were too often swayed by motives of economy untempered by justice or desire for the efficiency of the Army, all fell within the scope of the directorate. My own particular branch was concerned in discipline, finance, and the drawing up of Army orders which included questions on the Territorial Force Bill then being piloted through the House of Commons by Mr. Haldane.

I soon found myself sitting in that most uncomfortable official pew behind the Speaker's Chair in the House of Commons, listening to the outpourings of our legislators. The Territorial Force Bill was introduced early in March, 1907, and never having previously entered the sacred portals of the House, or indeed

having had anything to do with politicians, I was chiefly struck when listening to debates by the abysmal ignorance of the subject on the part of the majority of the speakers. Even members who rejoiced in a military prefix to their names displayed a want of knowledge for which a newly joined subaltern would have blushed. I suppose if speeches in our legislative assemblies were confined to members who are acquainted with the broad details of a subject under discussion, the public would be deprived of much of the interest and amusement which they now enjoy when following the course of a Parliamentary Session.

It was just about this time that I experienced my first all-night sitting. The Army Annual Bill was before the House. It contained *nothing contentious, but something had delayed the printing and delivery of the Bill.* Some sparring took place between the Government and the Opposition, tempers appeared to be ruffled, and in consequence the miserable little Bill was debated from 11 p.m. one night to 6 p.m. the following afternoon, the whole proceeding striking one as pure obstruction not calculated to impress an onlooker with the dignity or common sense of the Mother of Parliaments. On two other occasions in after years I had the bad luck to sit in that official pew all night.

It did not take long to learn that work in the War Office was very different from the easy-going existence depicted by writers to the press when, for one reason or another, that particular department is from time to time picked out for exposure. During some nine years' experience I found that an eight-hour day hardly sufficed to keep even with the work under normal conditions, while for the greater part of the year twelve and fourteen hours in office and at one's own home was an ordinary occurrence. It is true that anyone watching the doors of the building may any day at 5 p.m. see a crowd of officials pouring out ; these, however, are not the military elements, but the civilian staff, who work under Civil Service rules in all the Government departments. I speak

from personal experience, and mention the fact merely to refute the idea which is so prevalent among the uninitiated, that work in the War Office is a "soft job" for a soldier.

In May, 1909, Sir Charles Douglas* completed his time as Adjutant-General, and was succeeded by Sir Ian Hamilton. I have always looked upon Sir Charles Douglas as an ideal Adjutant-General who was beloved by those to whom he gave his confidence. Naturally shy, and somewhat reserved, he gave the impression of being a hard man, whereas in fact he was one of the most kindly beings one could meet. In dealing with discipline cases where punishment had to be meted out, no man knew better how to temper justice with mercy. An indefatigable worker, he would never give a decision until he had himself mastered the details of a case, to an extent that seemed at times almost unreasonable. It was this insistence on probing everything for which he was responsible to the minutest detail, and thereby overburdening himself with work that most men in his position would have left to subordinates, that hastened his untimely end in 1914, and deprived the nation of one who probably knew more about the organization of the Army than any living soldier. His fear of being unjust or of being a party to any jobbery nearly cost me my appointment, for it appears that when my name was put forward for a post in his department he demurred for some time because I belonged to the same regiment as himself, and it might be thought that the appointment was influenced by favouritism. As a matter of fact, we had only served together in the regiment for a few weeks.

I remember a conversation I had with him on the subject of a disagreement he had had on some point of discipline with the Secretary of State. The matter was an important one from the point of view of the Army, and I ventured the remark that were I in his shoes I should feel almost obliged to resign. Sir Charles, smiling somewhat wearily, said: "I am often tempted to do that,

* General Sir Charles W. H. Douglas, G.C.B. (1850-1914). Colonel, Gordon Highlanders. Chief of Imperial General Staff, 1914.

but to do so, except when some big question of principle is involved, would make it very difficult to carry on the working of a Government department.” His words often recurred to me in after years.

Shortly after Sir Charles Douglas left the War Office I went to Aldershot to take up the command of a brigade, a pleasant change after Whitehall, and a few weeks later found myself taking part in manœuvres over my native country in the vicinity of the Cotswolds. The most noticeable feature of the manœuvres was the desperately wet weather. By a curious coincidence I was riding with the Colonel of the East Lancashire Regiment as we marched by Leckhampton churchyard, near Cheltenham, where, as I have before related, my uncle who brought the Light Company of that regiment out of action at Waterloo sleeps his last sleep. A link with the historic past.

On the last day of May, 1910, I returned to the War Office in the position of Director of Personal Services, and a few months later received my promotion to Major-General.

During the autumn of 1910 a General Election was in sight, and South Wales was disturbed by a miners' strike, which had commenced early in September. During the first week of November the question arose of sending troops to South Wales in consequence of the spread of the strike throughout the Rhondda and Aberdare Valleys, and of the threatening attitude of the strikers. Some years previously the whole question of the use of troops in aid of civil power had been revised, the position being clearly explained by the publication of evidence given by Mr. Haldane before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which in concise and unmistakable language set forth the powers and limitations of officers who might be called upon to assist the civil power with the troops under their command. The use of troops under such conditions had not been fortunate in the past, the oft-quoted Featherstone riots being a case in point, and the Govern-

ment, especially in view of the approaching General Election, were anxious that untoward incidents should not occur. Telegrams and correspondence in connection with the possible move of troops to the scene of the strike had passed through my hands in the ordinary course of official routine, but I had no idea that I should be called upon to take a more active part in the proceedings.

On the morning of 8th November, Lieutenant-General Sir Spencer Ewart, the Adjutant-General, attended a conference at the Home Office to discuss the position, at which Mr. Haldane and Mr. Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, were present. About noon I received a message to go to the Home Office. It appeared that Mr. Churchill was anxious to send at once a special officer, to whom he could give personal directions, to command the troops which were being despatched. The first intention was to send an officer from Salisbury, but as Mr. Churchill wished to see him there would necessarily be delay. So when I walked into the room I found that my fate was fixed, and Mr. Winston Churchill in his usual impetuous way asked if I could catch a train at about 1 p.m. Having to collect a toothbrush and other necessities at my house, I compromised for a train at 3-15 that afternoon by which I started on my first venture to deal with labour trouble.

The two Ministers, while promising to supply all reasonable assistance in the way of police and military, were insistent that fire-arms should not be made use of except as a very last resort. From the time I started from London I came under the direct authority of the Home Office, except as regards purely military matters connected with the troops.

On my arrival at Pontypridd, on the evening of the 8th November, the situation was roughly as follows. The whole of the colliers of the Cambrian Combine were out on strike, and attacks had been made on certain mines to compel the officials and stokers to leave work, resulting in serious rioting on the 8th at

Llwynypia, where Captain Lindsay, the Chief Constable, was besieged and could not get out, also at Tonypandy. At the same time rioting had occurred round the Powell-Duffryn mines in the Aberdare Valley. At the beginning of the trouble the disputes between owners and miners in the Tonypandy and Aberdare Valleys had been distinct, but as the strikes progressed the strikers made common cause with each other, so far as the disturbance of the peace was concerned. Owing to the sudden and unexpected way in which I found myself thrown into the cauldron of trouble in South Wales, my sensations on arrival at Pontypridd were, I imagine, not unlike those of the dove that Noah sent out of the ark.

At Cardiff I was met by various military and police officials who struck me as being unduly perturbed by the reports that were coming in from Tonypandy. It was pouring with rain, I had no Staff officer or even servant with me, and the few officials I managed to get in touch with at Pontypridd seemed to have lost all sense of proportion, and to be obsessed with but one idea : to flood the valleys with troops. The Chief Constable, as I have said, being locked up in the Llwynypia mine with Mr. Leonard Llewellyn, the manager of the Cambrian Combine, was naturally influenced by his immediate surroundings, and at the moment of no assistance towards helping to a general view of the situation.

Of the forces available to cope with the disturbances the Chief Constable had some 600 police, composed of his own Glamorgan Constabulary and detachments of Cardiff and Bristol Police, which were reinforced during the night of the 8th and on the following day by 500 Metropolitan Police from London. Of troops, two squadrons of the 18th Hussars had been despatched to Cardiff the same day under orders to proceed to Pontypridd, but while I was in the train, Mr. Churchill, misled apparently by some information that had reached him, sent instructions that the cavalry should detrain at Cardiff, an unfortunate decision under the circumstances.

As soon as I heard of this occurrence I arranged for one squadron to come on at once to Pontypridd where it arrived before midnight. In the meantime infantry detachments were sent by the War Office to Cardiff, Newport, and Swindon, to be available if required.

Having obtained a room at the New Inn, Pontypridd, and arranged for a telephone to be installed, my first move was to telegraph for a few Staff officers and clerks, among the former whom I applied for by name being Captain W. Childs and Captain W. Horwood.* Telegrams poured in from the Home Office, who were, of course, being bombarded by every sort of civil authority and employer in South Wales, either giving advice or demanding action that would have complicated an already difficult situation.

Thanks to a downpour of rain the night passed quietly, and on the following day I was able to visit the Tonypany and Aberdare Valleys, and satisfy myself as to the conditions on the spot. During the day a further body of 300 Metropolitan Police arrived to reinforce the police under the Chief Constable, and although Mr. Churchill could not refrain from telling me where I ought to sleep on the night of the 9th, he gave me authority to exercise control over both police and military in the event of the military being called upon to participate actively in quelling disorder. The position during the previous forty-eight hours had been difficult and unsatisfactory, as must always be the case when operations of whatever kind are directed by a dual control.

During the day I had satisfied myself that the situation, though still dangerous, had been exaggerated both by the mine owners and by the magistrates of the district. The strikers were in a bad mood, many of them specially inflamed against Mr. Llewellyn and the son of Mr. Hann, the manager of the Aberdare mines. Had

* Brigadier-General Sir William T. Horwood, K.C.B., late 5th Lancers. Now Commissioner of Metropolitan Police.

either of these gentlemen fallen into the hands of the strikers at this time they would have had but short shrift. Many were the stories I heard of the unsympathetic nature (to put it mildly) of these two men, and experience inclined me to the belief that these tales were not totally devoid of foundation.

Before going further into the incidents of the South Wales coal strike of 1910, it will be as well to review the position from the point of view of the officer responsible for the use of lethal weapons, if unhappily troops should be called upon to intervene actively. On previous occasions when troops had been employed in aid of civil power the numbers had been small, and the responsible officer accepting without question the construction placed on the situation by employers and magistrates, and the fact that serious rioting was actually in progress, had acted on the demand of the civil authorities without concerning himself as to the causes which may have contributed towards inflaming the passions of the mob. Furthermore on these occasions troops were often housed and entertained by those on whose demand they had been called in, a fact which produced an impression among the workers that the soldiers were merely the blind agents of the employer class.

It is no business of a soldier, when called upon to preserve order, to concern himself in any way with the details of a dispute between parties of the community. His business is solely to preserve order, but in so doing he has the right to demand that neither side shall do anything which may aggravate and inflame the opposing party to commit acts of lawlessness. This was the principle which guided me during the months I was responsible for the police and military forces in South Wales.

On the one side was Leonard Llewellyn, a forceful autocratic man, admired by the miners for his sporting instincts and gallantry whenever a disaster took place in one of his mines, but a man who, by his rough-and-ready methods, was apt to drive those working for him to a state of desperation. Behind him was Mr. D. A.

Thomas,* who, from the dealings I had with him seemed to be under the impression that his standing as a member of Parliament gave him the right to lay down the law on any matter in which his interests were concerned. In the Aberdare Valley a Mr. Hann who controlled the employers' interests was not unpopular with the miners, having little of the overbearing manner of his brother-manager in the Rhondda Valley, but was not overblessed with physical courage. The bugbear of the miners in this part of the coal-field was a son of Mr. Hann, who had managed to incur their bitter hatred.

On the men's side the usual committees, so dear to the present-day working-classes, directed activities in both valleys. That at Aberaman was presided over by C. B. Stanton, who later became the most Imperialist of Labour members of Parliament, a striking figure with a mass of fair curly hair and a powerful pleasantly-toned voice of which he rather enjoyed the sound. We became very good friends in after years, for no man was more severe on shirkers and conscientious objectors when the country was in the throes of the Great War and I was responsible for advising the Government on the question of man-power.

In the Rhondda Valley the strike committee consisted of half a dozen fanatical socialists, strongly impregnated with the theories of Karl Marx. On several occasions they came to see me. Sparing of words as a rule, rigid teetotallers, unable to see beyond the narrow tenets of their creed, they undoubtedly exercised a strong hold over the strikers, and defied the authority of the miners' agents, the elected representatives of the men, a fact which complicated the situation as the employers very properly refused to recognize these self-constituted leaders. For my own information I made inquiries about the antecedents of the members of the strike committees, and found that as a rule they were indifferent

* David Alfred Thomas, 1st Baron and Viscount Rhondda of Llanwern (1856-1918). M.P. for Merthyr Burghs, 1888-1910; for Cardiff, 1910-1916. Managing Director of Cambrian Combine Collieries.

workmen and generally without any stake in the locality. Their energies being exhausted in attending meetings and in organizing their adherents, it is hardly to be wondered that they had little time or inclination to become efficient workmen.

A curious point was that the older men, mostly married and with houses of their own, allowed themselves to be brought to the brink of destitution by men for whom they did not conceal their contempt. As the strike progressed, and times became very hard for the men, many of whom were raising money on their houses and other belongings, I often heard grumbling against the action of the strike committee, and on asking why such men were allowed to obtain such commanding influence invariably received the same answer, viz., that the older men and good workmen could not be bothered after a day's work to attend meetings and listen to the outpourings of men for whom they had little respect, and in whom they felt no confidence. As a consequence, when voting took place to fill positions in the various "lodges" the results were decided by the votes of young and irresponsible men, who had little or no stake to lose when trouble came. In justice to the strike committee in the Rhondda Valley I must say that when they gave their word to me to carry out any undertaking it was scrupulously adhered to, a line of conduct which the employers might well have imitated.

There was no difficulty in obtaining the point of view of the employers, for I had not been many hours in the locality before I was inundated with information and advice as to what I should do, all tending towards one conclusion, viz., that the employers were entirely blameless for what was occurring, and that the men should be coerced into submission by force. To find out the other side of the picture was more difficult, the strike committees having made up their minds that both police and soldiers were at the beck and call of the owners.

Thanks to the tact and astuteness of Captain Childs, a private

meeting with the Rhondda strike committee was arranged, and over tea and ginger beer I managed to get a fair idea of their line of country. After I had pointed out that the cause of dispute between them and the owners was a matter of the most profound indifference to me, and that I was only there to prevent damage to property or molestation of individuals on either side, so far as the means at my disposal admitted, they seemed to thaw somewhat. Of course there was the usual wild talk, so dear to the small demagogue, one individual, Burton by name, thumping the table and asseverating that the mines would be drowned with blood if he was interfered with. Knowing that this individual had the reputation of being well to the rear whenever any rioting was in progress, I suggested that in that case no doubt he would take the first plunge into a mine, which left him mumbling for the rest of the interview.

The committee were as vehement against the misdeeds of the owners as the owners had been against the strikers. One of their main grievances was the importation of "blacklegs," which they affirmed was often done merely to irritate the men. They hinted that while they and their families were starving, I and the officers of the troops would be drinking champagne at the owners' expense, and were somewhat surprised when I told them that I had informed my officers that I did not wish them to accept any hospitality, because it must needs be one-sided and liable to misinterpretation. Before the committee left my room I told them that in order to avoid unnecessary conflict they had better keep in touch with me through Captain Childs, an arrangement which worked admirably throughout the strike, and provided me with information from time to time that went far to counter excesses which might have broken out.

A meeting with the directors of the collieries was not so satisfactory, owing to the somewhat dictatorial tone adopted by those present. The idea seemed prevalent among them that the military and police were at their disposal, to be increased to any

extent they might demand, and to be allocated according to their advice. I had to point out that the numbers were dependent on what the Government might consider necessary and find available, and that the decision and responsibility for the distribution both of police and military rested with me.

Before the meeting broke up I obtained from the managers a list of the places which, in their opinion, were vital points in the coal-field needing protection, and of the mines which might become derelict if pumping operations were suspended. It was also made clear that the protection of individual workmen and their families in their own homes was impossible, necessitating numbers of police and military far beyond what I understood the Government was prepared, or indeed able, to provide. Finally, the conditions under which the troops would intervene, a subject on which the mine managers had the most rudimentary ideas, was cleared up, viz., that active measures by the troops would only be resorted to in the event of the civil police having exhausted all their available resources.

The following day an inspection of all the mines and vital points in the two valleys was made, and the requisite number of police apportioned, strong police reserves being concentrated at Tonypany, Porth, and Pontypridd. Of the military, two squadrons of cavalry were accommodated at Pontypridd, infantry companies at Llwynypia, Aberaman, and Pontypridd, with a reserve of two companies at Newport.

This distribution provided ample defence against any sudden outbreak of disorder, and adequate reinforcement of any threatened point in either of the valleys. Investigations on the spot convinced me that the original reports regarding the attacks on the mines on November 8th had been exaggerated. What were described as "desperate attempts" to sack the power-house at Llwynypia, proved to have been an attempt to force the gateway, against which an ample force of police under the Chief Constable

was available on the spot, and a good deal of stone-throwing by which windows were smashed, and machinery might have been injured. The wooden palings round the mine had been pulled down, and had the mob been as numerous or so determined as the reports implied, there was nothing to have prevented them from overrunning the whole premises. That they did not was due less to the action of the police than to the want of leading or inclination to proceed to extremities on the part of the strikers. This fact was further exemplified in the attack on another mine, Clydach Vale, of which highly coloured reports had been received. In this case eight local policemen held the bridge leading to the colliery, while the mob made no effort to move to the right or left and swarm into the colliery enclosure, a very much easier proceeding than forcing the narrow bridge.

The inclination on the part of the colliery managers to send in highly coloured and alarmist reports on account of which police and troops might have been needlessly rushed about the country became so prevalent that I had arranged for selected military officers to be stationed at the principal centres, who would pass on information or requests from managers after verifying the fact, an arrangement which had a calming effect throughout the district. Countless cases in my experience could be given to illustrate the need for such a course, which I recommend to all officers, police or military, who may be engaged on duties for the suppression of disorder in the future.

Two examples will make my meaning clear. Mr. Hann, the general manager of the Powell-Duffryn Collieries, rang me up on the telephone one evening to say that five thousand strikers were marching down upon his house. He was quite positive about it and in a state of agitation. I asked him to send the officer attached to his area, who was on the spot, to the telephone. The officer, Captain Francis Farquhar, of the Coldstream Guards, who a few years later fell at the head of Princess Pat's Canadian Regiment

in France, soon rang through and told me he had heard nothing of any movement in the neighbourhood but would go and look round. Shortly afterwards he rang up again to say that the whole vicinity was absolutely quiet, and that he could find no grounds for the alarm of the mine manager. A more glaring case occurred at Cynon Colliery, to which a large force of police was sent on the demand of the manager. It afterwards transpired that the police were required to enforce the levying of a fine against the men, who had offered to pay at once eighty per cent. of the fine, an offer which had been recommended by the manager but refused by the owners. Had the case been correctly represented the police would have been saved the journey there and back, as they were withdrawn directly the facts were known.

From a long and varied experience I have found that when disturbances have occurred, or are likely to occur, the civilian mind is apt to magnify the importance of insignificant happenings without verifying the facts or taking count of the source or nature of the information. Cabinet Ministers are particularly liable to run away with first impressions on such occasions. When such unnecessary excitements only affect Government officials not much harm is done beyond increased nerve strain, but when police or the forces of the Crown may be involved, every sudden and unnecessary move involves discomfort, wear and tear, and finally grumbling and want of confidence in their superiors.

The presence of a large force of Metropolitan Police and of the military, whose numbers were no doubt exaggerated in the minds of the strikers, together with the inclement state of the weather, had a soothing effect on those members of the strike committees who were advocates of direct action. Mr. Lleufer Thomas, the stipendiary magistrate for the Pontypridd District, who was untiring in his endeavours to bring about a peaceful solution, extracted a promise from the strike leaders to express their disapproval of rioting, but they confessed their inability to control

their adherents if "blacklegs" were imported into the district. The men who composed the strike committees were, I formed the opinion, beginning to see that the spirit of insubordination that they had invoked by persuading the miners to break away from their elected and acknowledged leaders, the miners' agents, was gradually becoming uncontrolled, and involving them in a cataclysm of which they could not foresee the result.

By 12th November the situation from the point of view of preserving order had considerably cleared up. The managers had been informed that protection would be provided for all mines where a cessation of pumping would cause damage, but that where pumping machinery had been already closed down it was not to be started without my authority. This was necessary to enable protection to be provided. Also that while I would arrange for the protection of imported labour where certified necessary by a Government engineer who had been placed at my disposal, I would not countenance the importation of labour under other conditions.

During my stay in South Wales I was never free from anxiety that attempts would be made by the managers to circumvent these conditions, an anxiety that was fully justified, as on several occasions serious trouble was with difficulty staved off owing to attempts to start pumping and import labour without my knowledge or consent. The strike committees at the same time were cautioned that those mines which required pumping to avoid damage to machinery and to the works would be pumped, and that if rioting occurred the resulting responsibility would be on their shoulders. In the same way any damage to life or property would be drastically dealt with by the police, assisted if necessary by the soldiers.

In regard to picketing, a form of demonstration always popular with strikers in the early days of a strike, it came as a surprise to the committees to be informed that while the placing of pickets at

mine entrances was within their legal right under the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, the number of men composing each picket was within my discretion, and that if more than six men were present at any picket the police had orders to move them on for causing an obstruction. It came also as a surprise to them to know that pickets were forbidden by the by-laws to light fires within a certain distance of houses in order to keep themselves warm. In order that there might be no misunderstanding the committees arranged that all men on picket should wear white badges on their arms. They claimed that their pickets had the right to intercept men and "peaceably persuade" them out of hearing of the police, who watched each picket, but I pointed out that this could certainly not be tolerated because in the case of a single man there would be no evidence of intimidation.

Except for occasional outbursts of wild talk about the terrible things that would happen if their demands were not met, the committees were reasonable men to deal with, and adhered strictly to any engagements they entered into. I informed them of what had been arranged with the managers in regard to the pumping of mines and importation of labour, in which connection they offered to allow men to go into the Cambrian Combine collieries to help to raise the horses in the pits, an offer which was refused by Mr. Llewellyn. The incident of the horses created considerable stir in the press at the time, and was a clever journalistic move on the part of the management of the colliery with the object of enlisting sympathy against the strikers, who were painted as the would-be inhuman destroyers of the poor animals, or, to quote the words of the Home Secretary in the House of Commons, "as if they (the strikers) were wild beasts," which many of the London newspapers described them to be. As a matter of fact the horses were fed and watered daily and were quite unaffected by the strike, nor was there at any time any question of their safety from the moment that the Metropolitan Police and soldiers arrived at Tonypany on the evening of the 8th November.

A factor which greatly contributed towards maintaining and developing the atmosphere of tension and excitement in the strike area was the attitude of the local press. I ascertained that the confidential secretary of one of the principal mine managers had been a newspaper reporter, and was the instigator of much of the highly coloured propaganda that was being scattered broadcast to prejudice the public mind. A threat to deport the gentleman from the area had the desired effect of curbing his activities in this direction. The strikers, who had neither the opportunity nor the inclination to influence the press, were very bitter against this propaganda campaign, and on at least one occasion handled a reporter somewhat roughly who was wandering round the valleys in search of "copy."

On every occasion when labour troubles are in progress, more especially when rioting has taken place, the atmosphere of the locality is highly charged, the most improbable and impossible rumours find credence, and both sides are only too ready to seize upon any fantastic story in order to blacken their opponents' cause. To those who may be charged with the duty of maintaining order a first essential is to endeavour to allay this tension, a task in which the influence of the press ought to be a determining factor. Unfortunately, in South Wales the local reporters were evidently bent on the production of sensational headlines and paragraphs without any consideration as to the authenticity of their effusions. These inaccuracies in due course found their way into the London press, and thus an entirely distorted view of the state of affairs as it existed in the district was spread broadcast throughout the country.

In order that a coldly impartial view of the activities of both parties engaged in the strike might be put before the public, I was fortunate enough to obtain the services of Mr. Lionel James, at that time on the staff of *The Times*, whom I had met as a war correspondent in South Africa. Knowing that this gentle-

man would not take advantage of my confidence, I gave him *carte blanche* to see all reports and messages that came into, or went out of, my office, with the result that, thanks to his tactful handling, the public were able to read the real facts of the situation from day to day, instead of the flighty imaginings of the local young men out for "copy." This move had a distinctly steadying effect on both the parties with whom I had to deal, but some months later I was favoured with a copy of a unanimous vote of censure that had been passed upon me by some union or committee of the South Wales press, from which I gathered that my efforts to restrain the superimaginative faculties of energetic reporters had not been appreciated.

At a meeting with the Powell-Duffryn strike committee at Aberaman the arrangements made with the managers in regard to pumping and the importation of "blacklegs" was explained, together with the intention to prevent molestation or damage to property on the part of the strikers. C. B. Stanton informed me that he had organized his "fighting brigade" to protect his people against the police, and there was some wild talk about arming the strikers with revolvers. I took the opportunity of pointing out, somewhat to the committee's astonishment, that nothing would please me more, because once firearms were brought into play the troops, instead of acting as hybrid police, would at once assume their legitimate rôle as soldiers, and use their arms freely. Of course, the whole discussion was a game of bluff on both sides, and personally I never for a moment believed that the British working man would sink to the level of Irishmen or foreigners, by the use of lethal weapons against unarmed police. May that day be yet far off!

From the time when the Metropolitan Police and military arrived in the valleys on 8th and 9th November, no special outbreak occurred until the 18th, due in a great measure to the cold inclement weather, which took the edge off the excitements of

picketing and attendance at open-air meetings. Crowds paraded the streets for certain periods of each day and some stone-throwing was indulged in, especially at the houses of known "blacklegs" or officials. In this recreation women played a prominent part, often displaying a vicious bitterness far exceeding that of their male companions.

The presence of women, when rioting is in progress, is the most difficult factor which the forces of law and order have to reckon with, an advantage which rioters are apt to exploit to the utmost, sheltering themselves behind the weaker sex with the certainty of attracting public sympathy should consequential injury, or worse, befall the women folk. In the late rebellion in Ireland the employment of women was brought to a fine art, many of them being the active accomplices of murderers. Considerable rioting occurred on 18th November, when horses were brought up at the Ely Pit, and owing to the windows of the engine-room being smashed and the engine-man in a paroxysm of fright bolting off to his home, the officials had to be escorted through a booing, stone-throwing crowd to the Tonypandy Pit.

It is curious how the most elementary precautions for protection are neglected in districts where labour trouble may be expected, or has occurred. In the valleys of South Wales strikes, and consequent rioting, have not in the past been altogether unknown, and yet no attempt was made to wire the windows of power houses to prevent the ingress of stones and other missiles, nor to erect an enclosing barrier around vital parts of mines of sufficient strength to enable a reasonable number of men to hold the premises. Most of the shops, too, in the locality were unprovided with window shutters, and in consequence were systematically looted.

Theoretically, of course, the law is a sufficient protection for the Briton, but so long as human nature is what it is and the law provides for picketing and "peaceful persuasion," so

long will disputes culminate in forceful demonstrations and resulting damage to unprotected property.

On the occasions when rioting broke out, sometimes for no apparent reason except that the crowd of idlers who hung about the streets all day were tired of inaction, at other times on account of rumours, usually incorrect, of some action on the part of the mine managers such as the introduction of "blacklegs," police and military reinforcements were on the scene without loss of time, the location of reserves having been selected with this object in view. The golden rule that the soldiers were not to come into play until the police had exhausted all their resources was rigorously adhered to, and owing to the large numbers of police who had been drafted into the district the military rarely came into contact with the mob. In the Tonypandy Valley, however, the rioters found that the police with their heavy greatcoats and somewhat robust physique were handicapped when following agile young stone-throwers up the steep tracks that ascend the hill-side at right angles to the main road in the valley.

During the rioting that occurred on 21st November throughout the Tonypandy Valley the Metropolitan Police while driving the mob before them along the main road were heavily stoned from the side tracks, and suffered severe casualties. In order to counter these tactics on the part of the strikers on the next occasion when trouble was afoot, small bodies of infantry on the higher ground, keeping level with the police on the main road, moved slowly down the side tracks, and by a little gentle persuasion with the bayonet drove the stone-throwers into the arms of the police on the lower road. The effect was excellent; no casualties were reported, though it was rumoured that many young men of the valley found that sitting down was accompanied with a certain amount of discomfort for several days. As a general instruction the soldiers had been warned that if obliged to use their bayonets they should only be applied to that portion of the body traditionally held by trainers of youth to be reserved for punishment.

By the end of November, owing to the inclement weather, the limiting of numbers, and prohibition of fires, picketing had practically ceased, and except for a number of loafers about the streets, and occasional meetings there was little danger of collisions between the populace and the police, especially as by that time I was in possession of good intelligence of all that went on in both camps.

In the middle of December the trial of certain rioters for assault and other offences took place at Pontypridd. All sorts of rumours were current to the effect that the strikers would not allow any punishment to be inflicted, and if necessary would rescue their comrades, break up the town, and do all sorts of dreadful things. I had some difficulty in reassuring the townspeople, who were naturally, perhaps, anxious about their shop windows when they heard that the miners intended to come into the town in force. Captain Childs, who to an extraordinary extent had gained the confidence of the strike committees, saw the Rhondda Valley leaders, and told them that while there was no objection to their having a procession into the town, they would not be allowed near the Court House, and that on the first sign of disorder the troops would take charge of the town. An adequate force of soldiers was held ready, well out of sight, on the day of the trial, and arrangements made to send any of the defendants, who might be sentenced to imprisonment, to Cardiff by road instead of by rail.

The day came, and some thousands of strikers, with the usual accompaniments of bands and banners, marched into the town in a perfectly orderly manner. They were met by Captain Childs and directed to an open space near the station, where the leaders promised they would remain until Captain Childs returned and announced the result of the trial. This result was that two men were awarded imprisonment, and the others fined. According to plan, the two men bound for Cardiff Prison were at once placed in a motor car, and by the time Captain Childs returned to their

waiting comrades were well out of reach. When Childs climbed up on a railing and gave out the result of the trial there was a good deal of shouting and an incipient move towards the railway station, the men thinking that the prisoners would be despatched by train. When they heard what had happened the situation looked ugly for a time, but in the end, thanks to the tact of Captain Childs and the good sense of the leaders, the procession re-formed, the band struck up, and Pontypridd breathed again. So did I, for I confess to considerable anxiety, knowing that if the crowd broke loose nothing but bloodshed would avert considerable damage being done to property, to say nothing of probable loss of life.

Nothing of any interest occurred as the year dragged itself to a close. Just as it was expiring, after dinner on New Year's Eve I was rung up by Mr. D. A. Thomas from his private residence, evidently considerably annoyed at some straight talk which had taken place between Mr. Llewellyn and myself, when I hinted that if my instructions were not complied with I should withdraw protection from certain mines. Mr. Thomas, I suppose on the strength of being a member of Parliament, threatened an immediate complaint to the Home Secretary, and was not at all mollified when he learnt that I had long ago telephoned the incident to Mr. Churchill. However, the conversation closed by my wishing the irate director a Happy New Year.

Pontypridd is not the place one would choose in which to spend a couple of months in winter, but the discomforts incidental to the weather and the general dirt of the place were fully compensated for by the interest of applying a hitherto untried policy for dealing with disturbances consequent on labour disputes, and of studying classes of the community with whom a soldier rarely has the opportunity of coming in touch.

In order to carry out the policy of the Government every body of soldiers was accompanied by police in greater or lesser numbers, according to circumstances. For instance, detachments of

soldiers guarding mine premises always had two or three policemen attached to them, who, in case of threatened disturbance, would approach the crowd and warn them of the consequences of attempted violence. These tactics invariably succeeded in preventing direct collisions between the soldiers and the rioters. When the police were engaged in quelling serious disturbances any persons arrested by them were handed over to the supporting military for safe custody until order was restored. It was entirely due to Mr. Churchill's forethought in sending a strong force of Metropolitan Police directly he was made aware of the state of affairs in the valleys that bloodshed was avoided, for had the police not been in strength sufficient to cope with the rioters there would have been no alternative but to bring the military into action.

I was daily in communication with the Home Office, and during the first few days after arriving in the district noticed an inclination to interfere from Whitehall in details which could only be gauged by the man on the spot. This, however, very soon wore off, and from that time up to the day I left South Wales nothing could exceed the support given me by Mr. Churchill, or the entire absence of any interference in measures I judged necessary to cope with the situation. It was the old story of trusting the man on the spot, a maxim that is so often overlooked by politicians both in war and in troublous times of peace.

Another point of interest in South Wales was the study of the various police forces who had been drafted there from Bristol, Cardiff, London, and other places. The system is not altogether sound, each police force having its own characteristics, which may or may not fit in with the work in hand. When it comes to baton charges one police force is probably as good as another ; but for the tactful, firm, good-tempered handling of an angry mob so as to prevent, if possible, resort to force, the Metropolitan Police officer stands out far beyond his country comrades. The Metro-

politan Police were at times severely handled, but nothing could exceed their equable temper and stolid impartiality. That they were not altogether popular in the valleys is a tribute to their efficiency.

When the military are called upon to assist the police, it is essential that the regimental officers should be picked men who can be depended on to display tact, to ingratiate themselves with any elements they may come in contact with, and above all to be able to appreciate at their proper value the reports and rumours with which they will be inundated. Many an officer of sterling value in war is temperamentally unfit to deal with civil disturbances. One golden rule when troops are employed in aid of civil power is to make use of the greatest number possible. The ordinary civilian, especially when under the influence of fanatical demagogues, is not impressed by the sight of half a dozen men standing round a machine gun, and forgets, or is ignorant of, the power the insignificant-looking group can exert. A mad rush may take place and the soldier is at once faced with the terrible alternative of either using his weapon effectively, or of allowing his party to be overpowered, and thus encouraging the mob to some greater catastrophe in the future.

When dealing with disturbances it is curious what total ignorance of the law is found among the men and their leaders. Notices printed in large type and posted liberally about an area, pointing out in simple language the limitations imposed by law on congregating in public places, lighting fires about streets, following or molesting individuals, and so on, were found to have a very quieting effect, for there is always a large proportion in every mob to whom the law remains an object of respect.

In order to save the men employed in quelling disorder, whether police or military, it is essential to have a thoroughly well-organized system of intelligence, so that all reports and rumours may be sifted on the spot, and reliable information only forwarded

to headquarters. If this is not done men will be worn out by being bucketed about for no reason, and one day when the cry of " Wolf, wolf ! " is from reiteration unheeded an unfortunate incident may occur. From a somewhat extensive knowledge of strikes accompanied by rioting, and after verifying innumerable reports and rumours, I arrived at a conclusion which has never failed me, viz., that 10 per cent. only of an unverified report or rumour represented the actual fact.

To be responsible for troops and police when engaged in the suppression of disorder is one of the most trying and disagreeable duties a soldier can be called upon to perform. The least slip on the part of a subordinate may turn the scale, or political pressure may demand a scapegoat. A soldier, after reading Lord Haldane's clear exposition of such a situation, as given before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, might well apply the once well-known saying of a distinguished general, " Whatever you do, you are sure to regret it." That I had no occasion to regret my experience in South Wales was due to the support and abstention from interference of a strong Secretary of State, to the skill and forbearance of the police forces, especially the Metropolitans, and to the tact and unruffled temper of the officers in command of the detachments of troops, whose behaviour throughout a trying time was above all praise.

On 5th January, 1911, I handed over the command of the troops remaining in the district to Major Freeth,* and returned to my chair at the War Office.

Curiously enough, just before I returned to London " the Battle of Sidney Street " had been fought and won ! After I had discussed affairs in South Wales with Mr. Churchill, he touched, in I thought rather a self-conscious tone, on the Sidney Street affair, and asked me what I thought about it. I had been very much amused at the account I had heard of it at the War Office,

* Major-General George Henry Freeth, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

and said that I thought a few people besides Second Division clerks might have stayed at the Home Office, as I had been told that when the Home Office was rung up no one superior to a Second Division clerk was available, all the bigwigs having marched on Sidney Street !

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY in 1911 an incident occurred which eventually led to the publication of my father's diaries* in a complete form. The view had long been held in the family that the diaries should be given to the public, especially in the interest of the stage, but owing to the mass of intimate private and family matter which my father recorded day by day, intermingled with incidents of his public life, a natural hesitancy was felt in entrusting the books outside of the family circle. Reading the daily paper one day I was surprised to see a letter from my friend Laurence Irving† to the effect that he understood that the diaries were in the possession of the executors of the late Henry Neville, the well-known actor, and suggesting their publication.

As my father's diaries were at the moment in my hands, under lock and key, I called in the assistance of a mutual friend, Charles Macready Lowne, to unravel the mystery. It then transpired that Lowne and Irving had been discussing the matter, and Laurence Irving, misled by Lowne referring to me only by my Christian name, ran off with the idea that the custodian of the diaries was Henry Neville. When Irving returned to London the three of us discussed the subject, Irving especially pressing that for the sake of the profession the diaries should be brought to light. Most fortunately I obtained an introduction to Mr. William Toynbee, who undertook the task of editing the diaries, and, thanks to his scholarly handling and intimate knowledge of

* Diaries of William Charles Macready, by William Toynbee. Chapman and Hall.

† Laurence Sydney Irving, second son of Sir Henry Irving. Actor and author. Lost in the wreck of R.M.S. "Empress of Ireland," 29th May, 1914.

the period, produced an invaluable addition to the stage and social literature of the first half of the nineteenth century.

The year 1911 was a busy one for my directorate in the War Office, ceremonial arrangements for the Coronation, as far as troops were concerned, labour troubles which were constant throughout the year, and a war scare over the Agadir business in the summer keeping everybody well occupied.

The public who flock to see great national pageants have little idea of the weeks and months of quiet preparation necessary to fit together the requirements of the various Government departments concerned, or of the hitches that invariably occur, often almost at the last moment, threatening dislocation of the whole programme.

While preparations for the Coronation were going forward there was labour trouble in the Cardiff area, and at Manchester a transport strike threatened. At 7-15 p.m. on 5th July I was suddenly sent for to the Home Office, and at 10-30 p.m. the same night found myself with 200 Metropolitan Police en route for Salford, where the transport strikers were causing anxiety. Two squadrons of the Scots Greys and a battalion of infantry arrived the next morning. There were no exhibitions of violence on the part of the strikers, and having distributed the troops at various centres in case of accidents, there was little fear that any outbreak would occur. The strike also affected Manchester, but the Lord Mayor had not called for troops, and was evidently very proud of himself for not having done so. Did he, I wonder, realize that his brother Mayor of Salford, just across the small river, was chuckling to himself, knowing that if the situation became worse and Manchester required troops the Lord Mayor would have to get them from Salford?

One evening, when dining with the Chief Constable of Manchester, I heard an amusing account of the pilgrimage of the Chief Constable and two city councillors to London (at the

expense of the ratepayers) in order to see Maud Allan dance, and to report whether the performance would disturb the equilibrium of the morals of Manchester ! In the meantime Sir George (now Lord) Askwith and his staff were working hard to bring about a *modus vivendi* between the opposing parties, and at about 3 a.m. on 9th July a settlement was effected, troops and Metropolitan Police being withdrawn. The trip had been quite pleasant, entailing no hardships on troops or police, and no collisions with the strikers, although had the troops and police not been sent promptly on the requisition of the Mayor developments might have been more serious, and a settlement not so rapidly effected.

Labour troubles in South Wales still continued, and on 26th July the Home Secretary wanted me again to take charge of the situation there, but on the representation of the Adjutant-General he realized that I could not be continually flying about the country without neglecting the legitimate work of my directorate in the War Office, especially at a time when European complications were causing uneasiness among those responsible for the Army, which was in anything but a position to take the field. The reorganization of the Territorial Force under Mr. Haldane's scheme had not had time fully to materialize, the physique of the Special Reserve, as evidenced by the detachments of that force present at the Coronation, was deplorable, the mobilization arrangements, as was discovered later, were chaotic, and from a conversation I overheard between two senior officers it would appear that the shortage of sights and ammunition for the field howitzers was such as to prevent the provision of the requisite number of guns on mobilization.

So acute was the tension that on 28th July a subordinate officer in an access of nervous enthusiasm despatched telegrams to all record offices to the effect that clerks were to remain on duty night and day, in case mobilization should be suddenly ordered. Happily the *faux pas* was discovered and rectified before it became

public property, a contingency which would have complicated an already anxious situation as evidence that mobilization was contemplated. One member of the Army Council wittily summed up the prevailing excitement in a remark that the one and only constant factor in the situation was that he was not going to command the Army!

On the top of the continental complications labour troubles increased all over the country during the month of August. On the 10th of that month orders were prepared to bring 25,000 troops into London. Frequent conferences took place in Mr. Churchill's room at the Home Office on that day, at the last of which a humorous little incident occurred to relieve for a moment the usual atmosphere of tense solemnity which pervades such functions. The night was very hot, and about 11 p.m. Mr. Lloyd George appeared in a white alpaca or silk motor coat, beaming with good humour, and evidently in a hurry to get away. Winston, at the moment, was deadly serious, pacing up and down the room within the circle of serious-looking officials, and holding forth in regard to the measures that were to be taken. Mr. Lloyd George made straight across the room to the fireplace, where John Burns was standing, and began to tell him what was evidently, to judge by their laughter, a really good story. I do not think I have ever seen anybody look more angry than Winston did as he stopped in front of the table, and called Lloyd George to order. For a moment I thought he would hurl one of the official red books on the table at the future Prime Minister, who continued to be amused either at his own story or at Winston, and explained that he wanted to get off on his drive to Brighton.

The strike fizzled out twenty-four hours later, the Government pacificators, as usual, patching up a solution to which both sides agreed and with which neither side was satisfied. However, we were by no means out of the wood, for five days later collisions

between strikers and police and military occurred at Liverpool, when one man was killed and three wounded.

The following day troops were called out to cope with the railway strike, which threatened to paralyse the national life through the length and breadth of the land, whereupon I received instructions from Lord Haldane to control the distribution and movements of all troops employed in protecting the railways throughout the country. The principal railway directors and general managers, assembled in London in constant session, arranged for reduced time-tables with the men available, and kept me informed of the stations, signal-boxes, and vital points throughout every system that required protection.

Nothing could have been more harmonious or easier than my relations with the railway magnates, among whom I met for the first time men who were afterwards to be my colleagues in the War Office—Sir Guy Granet, Sir Sam Fay, and last, but not least, Eric Geddes, then assistant general manager of the North-Eastern Railway.

Happily and providentially we were spared the usual Government Committee on this occasion, and except for direct reference to the Secretary of State for War, Lord Haldane, I was able to deal directly with the Railway Conference. Practically the whole of the troops in Great Britain were on duty scattered along the railway systems, many unimportant lines being closed down, and on the main lines arrangements made for trains to run long distances by locking the signals at intervening points.

To cope with this business I had a second telephone installed in my room at the War Office for Captain Childs, and a large railway map on which points on the railways of primary and secondary importance were marked by different coloured drawing pins, the troops at each place being indicated by flags bearing the name and strength of each detachment of troops.

From 17th till 23rd August Childs and I stayed in the office

day and night, taking it in turns each morning to go home for a wash up, and a more fatiguing experience it is difficult to imagine. It may seem a very simple matter to sit in one's chair receiving reports or sending instructions based on the requirements of the railway companies by telephone, but at the end of six days and nights' continual telephoning I conceived a sympathetic feeling for professional telephone operators, although I doubt if many of them have put in one hundred and forty-four hours practically on end. I never before realized the physical exhaustion of long-distance telephoning.

The usual crop of wild rumours and reports incident to such occasions poured in and had to be reduced to approximate fact before being passed on to the troops. On the 23rd matters looked easier, and on the 25th the troops were withdrawn to their ordinary stations, cheered by a special message from His Majesty expressing his appreciation of the manner in which the troops had performed a very difficult duty, and of the forbearance and self-restraint shown by all ranks.

All through the autumn of 1911, and well into the summer of the following year, labour troubles of one kind or another kept Whitehall in a state of more or less constant excitement, which was accentuated in September, 1911, by the friction between Germany and France and movements of troops along the Belgian frontier.

The great difficulty in these alarms and excursions, from the War Office standpoint, was that while the Government required all preparations to be made for the immediate despatch of troops to any point where trouble might break out, they were insistent that nothing should become public to indicate that preparations were in hand, for fear that knowledge of the fact might prejudice the prospect of a settlement. Anyone acquainted with the number of channels through which orders must pass in order to ensure readiness for a sudden move of a large body of troops, and with the measures necessary for their supply, housing, and

comfort, will understand the difficulty of the position, especially when the state of tension and preparedness is dragged over a lengthy period.

In March, 1912, matters looked more serious owing to the miners throwing over the Bill brought in by the Government, and orders were issued for troops to be ready to move at once. On 26th March, a sub-committee of the Cabinet, with Lord Haldane as chairman, was formed to arrange for the feeding of the population in the event of the strike affecting the means of communication.

Eventually, on 28th March, troops were ordered out to various centres throughout the country, where they were well received, and on 6th April the Miners' Conference decided that the men should return to work, in the face of a majority of 42,000 against the proposal cast at the ballot two days earlier. During the month all troops were eventually withdrawn. For the moment peace reigned in Whitehall, only to be again disturbed on 23rd May, 1912, when the National Transport Workers declared a strike in London, which, however, was not a very serious affair, and was soon settled by Sir George Askwith, the "Pacifator-in-Chief," as we irreverently dubbed him in the War Office.

When walking home one evening early in March of this year, I found myself in an excited crowd which had collected to watch the removal to Vine Street Police Station of various suffragettes who had been amusing themselves by smashing shop windows in Piccadilly, in furtherance of their efforts to secure a vote. The forbearance of the police was as noticeable as the undignified appearance of the ladies as they were being carried off. It is a curious reflection that when at last the vote had been secured by these and other equally undignified methods, the first woman to secure a seat in Parliament, though she did not take advantage of it, was an Irishwoman who played a prominent part in the Irish rebellion of 1916.

When the transport strike had blown over I snatched ten days' leave to Montreuil in the Pas de Calais, little thinking as I strolled about its ramparts that in a few years' time it would become famous as the General Headquarters of the greatest army that Britain had ever thrown across the sea.

The day after I returned to London Mr. Birrell sent for me to the Irish Office to discuss the employment of troops in connection with the riots in Belfast. The Home Rule Bill having been introduced into the House of Commons on the 11th April, 1912, the seeds had been planted which were eventually to bring forth a harvest of bloodshed and destruction.

The constant withdrawal of troops from their stations to cope with labour troubles had seriously affected their training, and the General Staff were rightly insistent that nothing except the most urgent necessity should interfere with the summer training. The rioting in Belfast was not of a nature that could not be controlled by the Royal Irish Constabulary, an armed force which, if used with energy, should have been able to restore order without the assistance of the military. I did not at the time know that, thanks to the feebleness of Mr. Birrell's régime, the R.I.C. had deteriorated from the efficient force they once had the reputation of being. The only answer I got from the Chief Secretary was that he did not care whether the troops were trained to fight Germany or not, but he wanted them for police work and intended to have them—a reply that struck me as evidencing a limited and unpatriotic outlook. It was my first meeting with this gentleman, and the remembrance of it lessened my surprise when later on I saw the fruits of his rule in Ireland.

During December, 1912, Colonel Seely,* who had succeeded Lord Haldane at the War Office, told me that in the event of mobilization I should receive the appointment of Adjutant-General

* Major-General the Rt. Hon. John Edward Bernard Seely, P.C., M.P., C.B., C.M.G. Under-Secretary of State for War, 1911. Secretary of State for War, 1912-1914.

to the Expeditionary Force, a piece of news that pleased me enormously, although at that time in spite of rumours of wars I doubted that the Government would ever commit itself to an appeal to arms on any pretext. At the same time every effort was being made in the War Office to perfect the country's organization for war, should it come, and one of the most important steps was effected by Sir Spencer Ewart, the Adjutant-General, in compelling the financial authorities to agree to the appointment of a Director of Mobilization, which they had resisted on the grounds of expense.

The air during 1912 was so charged with war that even the figure-ridden nerves of the gentleman who presided over the War Office purse were affected, and he consented to the creation of a post, which, as events proved, was mainly instrumental in assuring the machine-like accuracy of the mobilization of the Army in August, 1914. For reasons of economy mobilization had been merged into the Directorate of Organization, which, with the best will in the world, was unable to cope with the mass of work thrown upon it, and it was well known that the mobilization tables were defective in many respects.

Colonel E. Woodward,* from the Southern Command, who was appointed Director of Mobilization, quietly set to work with a small staff, and in the course of two years, compiled and revised the mobilization orders for the whole Army, Regulars, Special Reserve, and Territorials, with an accuracy which can only be appreciated by those who watched the faultless working of the system when war came. I remember his coming into my room one day in July, 1914, and saying: "Thank God, I have signed the last mobilization table." I told him he deserved the G.C.B., which many men had got for less service to the country.

Among other preparations for possible war that occupied the

* Major-General Sir Edward M. Woodward, K.C.M.G., C.B. Colonel, The Leicester Regiment.

attention of the Adjutant-General's branch was the provision of prisons in the field. Both in Egypt and South Africa men had committed serious crime with the sole object of being sentenced to imprisonment or penal servitude in order to escape the privations, rather than the dangers, of a campaign. Cases were known where men had admitted that the food in prison was preferable to that which they got in the field, especially in South Africa, where at times rations were short and cooking perfunctory. There was another class, happily few, who would commit any iniquity, even to mutilating themselves, in order to avoid danger.

Hitherto men who had been sentenced to imprisonment or penal servitude in the field had been invariably sent to prisons at the bases or in the United Kingdom. In order to counter this wastage, and to ensure that as far as possible all men should remain in the area of operations, a complete scheme for the establishment of prisons in the field was worked out, special attention being paid to the diet, so that it should not compare favourably with what was supplied to men in the fighting line. The scheme, when put to the test during the Great War, worked admirably, thanks to the supervision of the late Brigadier-General P. Umfreville, who throughout the war was in charge of the organization. When inspecting the various prisons in France during the war the only complaint I ever received was in regard to the monotony of the rations, which, coupled with the fact that men were invariably more fit on leaving prison than on entering, was evidence of the care with which the ration had been worked out by a committee of medical and scientific experts.

The routine of these prisons was arranged to ensure that the men while undergoing punishment were also contributing to the prosecution of the war. When not employed on fatigue duties, loading and unloading stores, making duck-boards for trenches, and other material required by the Army, they were kept at intensive courses of physical and military training, the effect of

which, especially among the rapidly trained men of the new armies, was to return them to their units in a relatively high state of efficiency.

It was also during the two years prior to the outbreak of the war that the idea of the Suspension of Sentences Act was first conceived. Reading the paper one morning, I noted an account of an incident that had taken place in Algeria, where a French General had, in the presence of a full parade of troops, relieved a soldier who was under sentence for some act of indiscipline, from all consequences of his crime, owing to the man's gallantry in action. It appeared that under the French code, soldiers under sentence, instead of being sent away from the fighting line, remained in the ranks, where, by gallantry or good conduct, they had the opportunity of wiping out a crime. I handed the cutting over to Captain Childs, who, among his other accomplishments, was a qualified lawyer, to work up the legal aspect, and finally submitted it to the Army Council, who, however, fought shy of the innovation. In 1914, very shortly after the war started, I wrote a letter from G.H.Q., France, asking that the system might be put into effect. This was done without delay, Parliament passing the necessary Act with little discussion.

The effect of the Suspension of Sentences Act not only prevented the wastage which must otherwise have occurred in the fighting line if discipline was to be preserved, but it touched two classes of men always difficult to deal with in times of great physical and mental strain—the class who, ordinarily imbued with determination to sacrifice all for their country and their service, commit some act of cowardice or other military misdemeanour in a moment of nerve strain that for the time being sweeps all sense of discipline to the winds; the other class, those who are ready to take every opportunity of getting away from the firing line. Under the Suspension of Sentences Act, men of the first class on whom sentence had been passed and suspended returned to the ranks,

escaping the indignity of being committed to prison, and were able to wipe out the stigma which in a moment of strain had fallen on them. Many were the cases where men not only wiped their record clean by gallantry and good conduct, but also gained promotion and decorations for gallantry as a result of the system inaugurated by the Act.

Men of the second class, habitual shirkers, soon learnt that the door to the comparative safety of a prison on the Lines of Communication was not easy to open, and that they could be held to serve with their comrades at the front, in spite of the sentences hanging over their heads—sentences which, unless remitted, would have to be completed at the termination of the war. The figure of 9,469 sentences that were suspended during the war, quoted in “The Official Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire,” does not by any means represent the actual number, on account of the records of suspension being incomplete, a pardonable error in war time. It may be asked, why were any men sent to prison on the Lines of Communication? It was found by experience that men who became unmanageable at the front, and seemed determined to commit crime, benefited by a spell in prison and came to see the error of their ways. Every man committed to prison could be dealt with under the Suspension Act, of which advantage was taken as soon as it was seen that a man would play his part at the front, or when, as often happened, men applied to go back to the firing line.

Another class for whom a spell of prison was beneficial was that of men whose nerves were shaken, and whom it was not considered advisable to return at once to the fighting line. The majority of such men recovered their nerve after a comparatively short spell of prison discipline, and many distinguished themselves on rejoining their units. It has been universally admitted that the Suspension of Sentences Act was a great advance on former disciplinary methods, not only by maintaining the strength of units

at the front, but by offering to the soldier the opportunity, irrespective of any time limit, of wiping out past lapses by his own exertions.

But to return to 1913. The year was comparatively free from the intervention of the Army in labour troubles, for which I was devoutly thankful, as it became possible to get forward with legitimate work.

During the autumn Ireland, that ever-simmering cauldron of unrest, began to cause serious uneasiness in the minds of Ministers, especially of our Secretary of State for War, Colonel Seely. On the 21st October, Colonel Seely sent for me and suggested my going over to Ireland, hinting that I should be offered command of a Division. I told him that if a Division in Ireland was offered me I should for certain reasons refuse it, and also that I preferred to complete my time in my present appointment. Three weeks later I was again sent for by the Secretary of State, who told me that he wished me to go to Dublin and Belfast and report to him in regard to the failure of the police during the late disturbances in the two cities, and on other matters connected with the military administration of the command. A few days later I left for Dublin and Belfast, returning to London on 24th November to be told that the Government intended to do nothing—in fact would “wait and see”—but that possibly there might be a compromise.

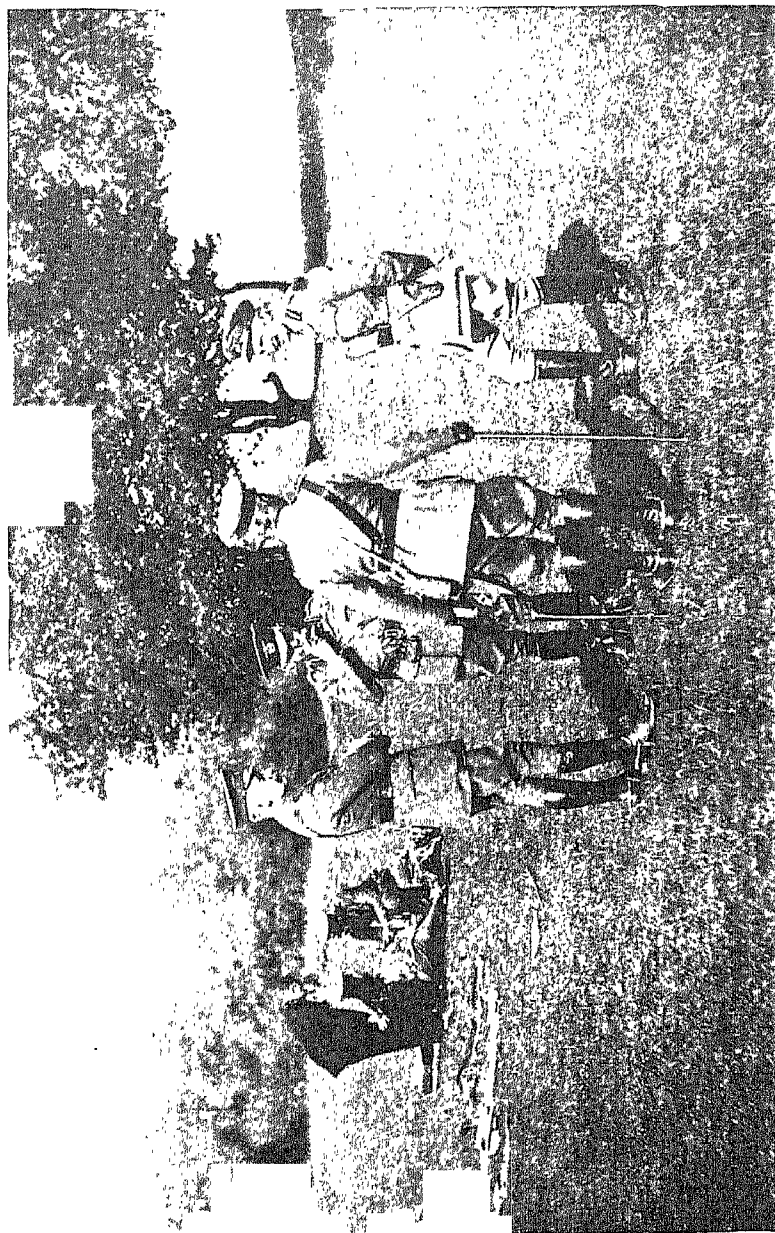
From this time, the first occasion on which I was called upon to interest myself directly in Irish affairs, up to the day when the Union Jack was hauled down at the Royal Hospital in Dublin in 1922, I endeavoured to keep an open mind on the various kaleidoscopic aspects of Irish politics. Throughout my professional career I have held the view that so long as a soldier continues to serve on the active list it is no business of his to mix himself up in any way with the political views of whatever Government may be in power at the time. If he feels that the policy of those under whom he is serving is in his opinion inimical to the

interests of the Army or of the country, his remedy lies in removing himself from active employment, thus regaining his liberty to resist, if he so desires, a policy to which he is opposed. Deviation from this rule can only lead to one result : the disintegration of every bond of discipline that holds the Army together. No one can but admire a man who sacrifices himself for his honest convictions, however much one may disagree with those convictions ; but it is otherwise when, while enjoying the loaves and fishes of office, a man exerts himself to undermine the policy of those by whom he is employed. One exception to this rule, and one only, can I picture, and that is in the event of the safety of the Throne being threatened by political strife.

To understand the state of Northern Ireland from the time I first became mixed up in its affairs towards the end of 1913, it is necessary to say a few words on the origin of the confederacy which eventually took up arms to enforce its claims against the British Government. This is no place to trace the germs of political unrest in the so-called " Island of Saints," which has been the bane of successive Governments for centuries, germs implanted in the souls of its inhabitants, whether of the North or of the South, away back in the dark ages of our history.

From the time when a policy of Home Rule for Ireland first appeared on the political horizon, agitation, at first on purely constitutional lines, manifested itself in Ulster among the descendants of the borderers planted in the North by the Stuart kings.

In December, 1904, the Ulster Unionist Council first saw the light, a body constituted for the purpose of advancing and defending Ulster Unionism, and consisting of some two hundred members belonging to Unionist Associations and County Grand Lodges of the Orange Institution. The first indication of armed resistance appears in a manifesto issued from the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland on 7th December, 1910, in which the following sentences occur : " You must use every effort to defeat them (Mr.



1913 MANŒUVRES

Sir Nevil Macready, Sir J. Grierson, Sir A. Paget, Sir Henry Wilson

Redmond and his party) at the polls, neglecting no opportunity of influencing votes in Great Britain. But you are equally bound to prepare for a struggle in this country if we fail to carry the elections. Already steps are being taken to enrol men to meet any emergency."

The first muster of the Unionist forces in Ulster seems to have taken place at Craigavon, the residence of Captain Craig, M.P.,* near Belfast, on 23rd September, 1911, some 300,000 people, according to police estimates, attending. It was shortly after this meeting, at which the principal speaker was Sir Edward Carson, that drilling was reported to be taking place in various parts of the North. The next dramatic move was the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant on "Ulster Day," the 28th September, 1912, by which the subscribers, while protesting their loyalty to the King, and after invoking the aid of the Almighty and the memory of their forefathers, pledged themselves to use all means which might be found necessary to defeat the conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland.

A protestation of loyalty to His Majesty, accompanied by an expressed intention of resisting in arms the decrees of the King's Government, has always struck me as an anomaly. That there may be a satisfactory explanation would seem apparent from the fact that many eminent men who had no personal interests in Ulster were able to subscribe to the document. From this time onwards arrangements to perfect the military organization of the Orangemen were pushed rapidly forward, arms of various descriptions filtering into the country through different channels, and in December, 1912, a decision was taken to enrol the Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.) for military service in the campaign against Home Rule, appeals being made openly in the press to all who had signed the Covenant to join the force. By the end of September, 1913, the U.V.F. had reached a strength of over

* Lieut-Colonel the Rt. Hon. Sir James Craig, Bt., P.C. First Prime Minister of Northern Ireland since 1921.

56,000 men, and was commanded by Major-General Sir George Richardson, K.C.B., a retired officer of the Indian Army, who had seen service in Afghanistan and Egypt.

Parades were constantly held in various parts of the North, speeches being delivered by Sir E. Carson and other politicians, Irish and British, the latter presumably espousing the cause for political reasons, thus following the example of Sir E. Carson, who, so far as can be traced, could claim no connection with Ulster, family or otherwise.

The question of the legality of these parades was referred to the Law Officers of the Crown, who advised that those taking part in the drilling, marching, and other military operations, as well as those who advised and openly encouraged them, were guilty of felony, but the Government decided to take no action in the matter. Arms continued to dribble into the country, the police calculating that during the months of October and November, 1913, some 4,000 modern rifles had reached Belfast, the total quantity in Ulster at the end of 1913 being estimated at 17,000 arms of all kinds. During December, 1913, proclamations under the Customs Consolidation and the Customs and Inland Revenue Acts were issued prohibiting the importation of arms, etc., a belated effort on the part of the Government which led to no result. At the Winter Assizes of 1913 a man was tried for going about armed in contravention of the law, and after some delay judgment was given in the man's favour, the decision being, however, reversed some months later in the Dublin Courts.

Activities on the part of the U.V.F. became intensified during the early part of 1914, information being sought as to the strength of the Royal Irish Constabulary and coastguards at the various stations, the staffs at the post offices and railway stations, and particulars in regard to the halls and meeting-places of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the United Irish League, two Roman Catholic societies which were anathema to the Orangemen.

Steps were also taken to organize a special corps of 13,000 men, 3,000 of whom were in Belfast, to act as a striking force in Antrim, Armagh, Donegal, and Londonderry, as might be required. By the end of March, 1914, it was calculated that the U.V.F. had reached a strength of 84,000, of whom some 25,000 were armed with rifles of sorts, many of modern types.

Considerable activity was noticeable during the night of 19/20th March, 1914, apparently on account of the expected arrest of certain leaders whose houses were guarded by Volunteers, and an elaborate system of signals was arranged between Belfast and Craigavon.

Such shortly was the state of affairs when, as one newspaper put it, "' King ' Carson was installed in his palace at Craigavon," and I was ordered by Mr. Asquith to go over to Ulster on a not very clearly defined mission. During the month of March, 1914, I visited Dublin, Belfast, and several places in Ulster where troops were stationed in order to make the acquaintance of the civil and military officials. The troops in Ulster consisted of an infantry brigade under the command of Brigadier-General Count Gleichen,* which formed part of the 5th Division under Major-General Sir C. Fergusson,† whose headquarters were at the Curragh, together with some companies of Royal Garrison Artillery in the coast defence forts.

Apart from the fact that I was supposed to carry out this duty in Ulster in addition to my ordinary work as a Director at the War Office, the position was not altogether an easy one either for the military authorities in Ireland or for myself, because although I was empowered to take command of the troops in Ulster in certain eventualities I was working directly under the authorities in London, and not in any way under the Commander-in-Chief

* Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen, K.C.V.O., C.M.G. Commanded the 37th Division during European War.

† General Sir Charles Fergusson, Bt., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. Commanded 5th Division and 2nd and 17th Army Corps during European War.

(Ireland). Thanks to the kindness and consideration of Sir Arthur Paget,* the C.-in-C., his chief administrative officer General Friend, and General Sir C. Fergusson commanding the Division at the Curragh, my path was made easy and no difficulties occurred.

On 20th March, 1914, the so-called "Curragh incident" occurred. This arose from an impression getting abroad that troops from the Curragh were to be sent to coerce the Orangemen, but whether that impression was due to indiscreet talk in higher military circles in Dublin, or to secret orders having been sent out in view of such an eventuality, I do not know. If the latter was the case it is curious that I should not have been informed, as no word reached me of any projected move northwards; also if orders were issued, it is difficult to understand why any demur to carry them out was not at once met by the military authorities on the spot by arresting the delinquents.

Whatever the cause, the officer commanding the Cavalry Brigade at the Curragh, Colonel H. Gough,† and four of the officers commanding cavalry regiments under him made it plain to Sir A. Paget, when asked if they would serve against Ulster, that they would not take part in the move if ordered. A telegram was sent from the Secretary of State, Colonel Seely, directing Sir A. Paget to interview these officers and to point out that a refusal on their part to carry out any duties that might be ordered would entail the resignation of their commissions. The instruction was perfectly clear and so obvious to anyone with even the smallest experience of Army routine that only some previous misunderstanding between the officers concerned and the Irish Headquarters could have necessitated its despatch, presumably in order to get the C.-in-C. out of a difficulty. At the interview between the officers and Sir A. Paget the latter brought in the subject of pensions, emphasizing the fact that resignation would

* General the Rt. Hon. Sir Arthur H. F. Paget, P.C. (Ireland), G.C.B., K.C.V.O. Commanding the Forces in Ireland, 1911-1914.

† General Sir Hubert Gough, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., K.C.V.O. Commanded 5th Army, B.E.F., 1917-1918.

entail loss of pension, a point which had been purposely omitted from the instructions he had received, it being the consequential result to any officer who is called upon to resign. To bring in such an argument at once enabled the officers to offer the obvious retort that they would not sell their convictions for financial gain.

The affair made a great sensation, being cleverly worked up by the political opponents of the Government, and Colonel Seely taking the whole blame upon himself shortly afterwards resigned, but not before issuing an order to the Army which led to the resignations of Sir John French, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and the Adjutant-General, Sir S. Ewart. The original draft of the order was merely a direction to the Army on its duty and discipline, but a paragraph was inserted by the Secretary of State himself to the effect that it was never the intention of the Government to utilize the armed forces of the Crown for the suppression of lawful opposition to Home Rule. This paragraph embodying the intentions of the Government should never have been inserted above the signatures of Army Councillors who were not in the Government. This was pointed out at the time, but either from a sense of loyalty to the Secretary of State, or for some other reason, the order was signed and the two soldiers followed the War Minister into retirement.

The action of the officers at the Curragh was encouraged openly by certain officers in the War Office itself, even to the extent of endeavouring, while I was away in Ulster, to seduce members of the Staff of my own directorate from their duty, attempts which I am glad to say met with no success.

The whole affair was regrettable and unnecessary. If the Government had any intention of marching on Ulster and fighting Carson's followers on the Boyne, which was the kind of talk that flew about at the time, orders should have been issued and any officer or man who refused to obey put on his trial by court-martial without further talk. If there was no intention of employ-

ing troops steps should have been taken to discover the source of the rumours which were floating about and a contradiction published to the Army. The order to the Army on duty and discipline, already mentioned, should have gone forth from the Army Council, while the Government, had they so desired, could have made known their intentions as expressed in the fatal paragraph in which Colonel Seely induced his military colleagues to acquiesce. If there had been any intention to move troops north for aggressive purposes, it would have been well to have eliminated any who had family ties with the North, in the same way as when detailing troops for duty in strike areas care was always taken not to send any units with territorial connections in those particular localities.

During my visit to Belfast in March, 1914, I was convinced that through a policy of drift the Government had lost all control of the situation, which was entirely in the hands of Carson and his followers. Every Government service was either effete or unreliable, results due on the one hand to the policy of Dublin Castle, and on the other to sympathy with the Orangemen. Letters sent through the post were delayed and tampered with, the telegraph service could not be relied on, while messages sent by telephone might just as well have been shouted from the house-tops so far as secrecy was concerned. The Customs officials, while doing their best to check the importation of arms and other contrabrand goods, were so hopelessly understaffed as to make their efforts futile. Now and again small consignments of arms and ammunition were secured, but these were but drops in the ocean in comparison with the amounts that filtered in all round the coast.

With regard to the Royal Irish Constabulary I was sorry to be obliged to come to a conclusion which I had no occasion to modify during the years which followed when I was in close touch with that force. This once magnificent body of men had undoubtedly deteriorated into what was almost a state of supine lethargy, and had lost even the semblance of energy or initiative

when a crisis demanded vigorous and resolute action. The immediate reason was not far to seek. If an officer of whatever rank took upon himself to enforce the law, especially during the *faction fights which are the popular pastime of the Irish*, his action would as often as not be disavowed by the authorities at Dublin, on complaint being made to them by the Irish politicians by whose favour the Government held office. This is no idle assertion on my part.

When I first discussed the state of affairs in Belfast with Mr. T. Smith,* the then Assistant Commissioner of the R.I.C. in that city, I was struck with, I will not say his reluctance, but a certain hesitation on his part to enforce drastic measures, should such become necessary. During our conversation the reason, on the lines I have referred to above, came out, and it was quite evident that he and his men were suffering from want of confidence in the authorities at Dublin, to whom they should have looked for support. My memory reverted to a conversation at which I had been present between Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Birrell, when the former asked the Chief Secretary why the R.I.C. did *not do more to stop the outrages which were then taking place throughout the country*. Birrell half-jokingly replied in the sense that it could hardly be expected that the poor police, scattered about in small packets and spending their time fishing, would take the risk of tackling armed disturbers of the peace. Winston, evidently annoyed, burst out, asking him if that was the state into which he had allowed the R.I.C. to drift during the years he had been Chief Secretary. It made no impression, however, on that light-hearted statesman.

Another reason given for the deterioration of the force was that in the old days men were recruited from a good class of farmers' sons and such like, but as wages rose while the pay of the

* Sir Thomas J. Smith, K.B.E. Inspector-General, Royal Irish Constabulary, 1920-1922.

force remained stationary these men gradually disappeared, and were replaced by an inferior class of lower education and with less stake in the country. One feature that I noticed myself before many days had passed was the low standard of some of the officers filling important posts, such as county and district Inspectors. These men had evidently been promoted for their length of service without sufficient weight being given to their capacity to meet the greater responsibilities involved by promotion. Owing to my representations to the Inspector-General, several of these inspectors were changed during the time I was in the North, especially in one glaring case which will be referred to later.

In addition to all other shortcomings was the outstanding fact that many of the the force were, in their hearts, on the side of the Orangemen, whilst others thinking, and not without reason, that the Government would in the end be worsted by Carson, were inclined to "sit on the fence" and not commit themselves if possible to any pronounced action.

But even if the force had retained its former efficiency the system under which it was housed constituted an impediment to complete freedom of action. The so-called "barracks" in small towns and villages were merely ordinary houses often wedged in between others, and even when they were detached buildings of more pretentious structure were quite indefensible. The result was that these places were at the mercy of any armed gang who chose to attack them, and offered little security to the men, arms, and stores which they sheltered. As a rule even telephones, an essential requisite for any police office apart from the question of defence, were not installed, while reports, even from places just outside Belfast, filtered through a proscribed channel to Dublin and from there back to Belfast, if the police in that town might in any way be affected. The Intelligence Service, which was practically confined to the police, was ineffective so far as early and

accurate information of any projected moves on the part of either the Catholic or Protestant faction was concerned.

The military garrison in the North, consisting of five English county battalions, was in a high state of efficiency, as was proved a few months later on the battlefields of Flanders and France, and I never had a moment's anxiety that officers and men would not carry out any duty for which they were ordered. The nerves of the Government had been rudely shaken by the Curragh incident, and certain newspapers supported the view that the Army could not be relied upon to enforce authority against Carson and his followers, a totally unmerited insult to the loyalty of the soldiers.

I took the occasion when inspecting each of the battalions in Ulster to point out that while, as a matter of course, they would do their duty, however disagreeable it might be, I was prepared to give leave to England, or to send to the depots on temporary duty, any officers or men who had been born in Ulster, or who had family connections there. Very few, if any, took advantage of the offer. If the Orangemen were counting on the disloyalty of the troops in the event of an outbreak, I am convinced that they would have been rudely undeceived, for the reason that the British soldier did not trouble himself with the fine distinction between a rebel in arms who sang "God Save the King" and one who sang "The Wearing of the Green." I have always been devoutly thankful that the question was never put to the test because, with the absurdly inadequate number of troops, any attempts of the U.V.F. to gain their objective by force of arms would have resulted in very serious bloodshed, which must always be the case when troops have to rely on their weapons rather than upon their numerical strength.

During my stay at Belfast in March I called on Sir E. Carson at Craigavon, a visit that to me had its comic side. As I drove up with my A.D.C., sentries of the U.V.F. in uniform presented arms, and a small crowd of press photographers, who appeared to

be part and parcel of the establishment, snapshotted us as long as we were in view. Mr. Craig, as he was then, received me in a small ante-room, and with much solemnity informed me that Sir Edward would see me directly. I did my best to play up to the evident honour that was being done me, but unfortunately, for no reason at all, I suddenly thought of the Dalai Lama, the mysterious high-priest of Tibet, and with difficulty recovered my wandering senses. What Sir Edward talked about I have quite forgotten, but I am sure we avoided all reference to Ulster. A few days later one of his Staff left a card at my hotel, a politeness not imitated by all of his adherents on whom I had left cards, one gentleman, indeed, returning my own to me.

If it had not been for the serious issues at stake, there were many humorous intervals to relieve the monotony and truly dreadful climate of the Black North. That its Orange inhabitants should object to my presence is hardly to be wondered at, since their local press, in its efforts to support the good cause, informed the public that I was a Roman Catholic and a Home Ruler, though towards neither the religious nor the political creed have I ever had the slightest leaning. Some years afterwards, when I went to Dublin as Commander-in-Chief, a Dublin paper, in a complimentary note on my appointment, finished up with the qualification that it was a pity I was an Ulsterman! Another soft impeachment to be denied. As a matter of fact, I have never considered myself in any way an Irishman. My grandfather on my father's side claimed that nationality, the family having at some period migrated from the South-West of Scotland and settled in Dublin, but my father was born in England of an English mother, and my own mother was typically English. Even the Irish spelling of the family name—McCready—was discarded by my father as a young man in the year 1816 on account of a serious disagreement he had with his father, and he then adopted the name which he afterwards made famous.

The efficiency of the Secret Service branch of the U.V.F. was much advertised in the press, and its agents seemed to take a great interest in my comings and goings, about which there was no mystery beyond my desire to keep out of the newspapers as far as possible.

The dining-room of the hotel where my small Staff and I lived had a large window looking on the railway station platform, so that we had our meals in full view of any persons walking about outside. For several days we noticed a furtive-looking individual who walked up and down outside the window, evidently much interested in our appetites. He would then disappear into the telephone box opposite. One day I sent my A.D.C. out to him with the menu to tell him that if it would help him we would let him have the menu every day. After that he kept more in the background. His energy was quite superfluous, because probably every servant in the hotel was in touch with the U.V.F. Intelligence Branch.

Another subject of much amusement to us was our chauffeur, a cheery, well-educated man, but a rabid Covenanter. Our own Intelligence, though very defective, was not altogether wanting, so that occasionally when we got an early report that arms had had been moved about the country, and knowing that our chauffeur took part now and again in gun-running expeditions, we used, before getting into the car, to appear surprised at the mud on the wheels, and with mock solemnity examine it, and then agree that we recognized it as the same soil we had noticed at such-and-such a place, naming a place where we knew the gun-runners had been active during the night. Several times we hit the right nail on the head, and our chauffeur was not quite comfortable. One day when we had pulled up to eat our lunch I drew him out on the subject of Home Rule, and discovered that he implicitly believed that in the event of the Home Rule Bill passing the Pope would come and live in Dublin. Nothing could shake

him on this point, and yet he was well educated, intelligent, and broad-minded on many subjects. To close the subject I recommended him to save up his money to take a Cook's tour to Italy, and then decide if the Pope would leave it for a God-forsaken place like Dublin. Nowhere in modern times is the precept that religion brings not peace but a sword exemplified more powerfully than in Northern Ireland.

Having opened a small office in Belfast and installed a Staff officer to keep me informed of any intelligence of importance, I returned to London early in April to get on with my work at the War Office, General Count Gleichen, who was fully acquainted with my views and such plans as were possible, acting for me in my absence. For reasons which I have touched upon it was almost impossible to check in any way the activities of Carson and his adherents; the Civil Services were inefficient from one cause and another, the troops too weak in numbers to prevent a determined outbreak, which they could only have crushed after a heavy loss of life on both sides, while 90 per cent. of the inhabitants of the North believed that the Orange organization was more powerful than Mr. Asquith's Government. The only effective check on gun-running was by the rigorous search of every vessel approaching the coasts of Ireland, which, apart from other drawbacks, would have necessitated the employment of more ships than could be made available by the Admiralty. Having unburdened myself of these views to the Government, I hoped that I might be left in peace so far as Ireland was concerned.

On the 25th April, 1914, England was startled by the news of Major Crawford's gun-running exploit at Larne, Bangor and Donaghadee during the previous night. The whole affair was well organized, and as the secret had been kept no extraordinary measures had been taken by either troops or police, as is suggested in Mr. R. McNeill's book, "Ulster's Stand for Union." As a matter of fact, information to the effect that some move was on

foot in the Donaghadee direction did reach a police officer on the afternoon previous to the occurrence, to which reference will be made later. A considerable quantity of rifles of foreign make and ammunition was successfully landed and disposed of.

I was not in the least surprised, for, as I have already said, the continued policy of drift had enfeebled the resources at the disposal of the Government in the North of Ireland to an extent which gave the Orangemen practically a free hand. Had the Government desired to vindicate its authority after the arms were landed, there was no reason why those arms known to be in the shipyards could not have been secured. Such action might have led to bloodshed, but the Government would have regained its prestige.

I was prevented by illness from going across on the day the news arrived, but reached Dublin on 28th April, seeing the authorities there, looking over all reports which had been received, and arranging for the location of two battalions which were held in readiness to move north if required. Sir James Dougherty, the Under-Secretary, was very angry, and fairly screamed at me in his high-pitched voice because I was not prepared to dig up the whole of somebody's demesne where the police reported that arms had been buried. I told him that if the police could point out the exact spot the thing might be done, but in view of what I understood to be the present policy of the Prime Minister I was not going to concentrate a large body of troops and police to protect working-parties while for days they dug up the whole estate, and to risk a pitched battle with the U.V.F., especially as the police report might have no foundation in fact. I also told him that if reliable information was procurable that arms were stored at any definite place they could be seized, or that they could be taken from armed men parading the streets, provided I received instructions from London to that effect, and the force necessary to carry out such operations. Sir James Dougherty, who had been a

minister of religion before entering the Civil Service, struck me as being far too old to hold any position in which steady nerves and calm judgment were required ; but Dublin Castle has, I believe, always been famous for the human curiosities within its walls, of whom it has been my fortune to see not a few.

On arrival at Belfast the same evening information which seemed reliable pointed to the fact that a number of the rifles recently landed were stored in Messrs. Workman and Clarke's shipyard, the exits of which were watched by police. A Customs officer who had seen these arms was warned at his peril to quit the yard. Mr. Smith, the Assistant Commissioner, very properly pointed out that in view of the judgment given in the test case* already referred to, which had not then been reversed on appeal, it would be illegal for the police to seize the arms, a proceeding which would in any case be forcibly resisted. As an instance of the way business was carried on by the Castle authorities in Dublin, no copies of the Arms Proclamation had been sent to the police, who saw it for the first time in the daily papers ! A further point was, that if the leaders of the gun-running exploit, who were known, were prosecuted for a misdemeanour no jury would convict. Altogether a truly parlous state of affairs.

On the following day, 28th April, on account of certain information that had come in I went to see the District Inspector at Newtownards. After the usual beating about the bush, so dear to many of the Irish, I extracted from him that on the evening before the gun-running took place a man had told him that an attempt was to be made that night at the very locality where the landing actually occurred. The configuration of the roads leading from Bangor and Donaghadee to Belfast is such that, had the police and military been made aware before 9 p.m. that a landing was contemplated, it would have been by no means a difficult task to

* See page 174.



SIR E. CARSON

Russell, London

have blocked all exits from the coast. Although, perhaps, it was just as well that events turned as they did, it was no excuse for the District Inspector to fail to pass on the information to higher authority. The omission was, I am inclined to think, due to stupidity, and the officer was removed.

In view of the numbers of rifles already in possession of the U.V.F. the numbers landed on 25th April was not a very formidable addition to their armament, nor was the exploit of sufficient importance to move the Government to effective action. A flotilla of destroyers was ordered to Belfast Lough to patrol the coast, and I found myself made a Resident Magistrate for nine counties and a J.P. for Belfast, for the purpose of co-ordinating police and military action should it become necessary, a step on the part of the Government which resulted in my appearance in *Punch*! "Toby M.P.," in one of his amusing descriptions of the proceedings in the House of Commons, visualized my writing the following letter myself :—

Sir,—From information received, I expect Ulster will be in a blaze before the end of the week. Please hold yourself in readiness to co-ordinate the action of your troops with that of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Your obedient servant,

NEVIL MACREADY,
Resident Magistrate.

To Sir Nevil Macready,
General in Command of Troops in Ireland.

The situation, indeed, was not very far removed from this ; the official instructions were that I should take command of the troops in Ulster for all purposes connected with the rendering of support to civil power, while Mr. Asquith in reply to a question in the House said that in case of great emergency I could act as a Resident Magistrate. The whole situation was so impossible, in

view of the numerical weakness of the troops and the nervous excitement in Belfast fomented by alarming headlines in the local and English newspapers whenever small bodies of troops were moved in order to carry out their routine training in musketry and field work, that I went to London on the night of the 29th April, returning the following night, in order to explain the situation personally to Mr. Asquith, and if possible to ascertain what were his intentions in the event of the deadlock continuing indefinitely. Two important points were settled, that the troops were to carry out their routine training in spite of any construction that might be put on their occasional movements, and that there was no intention of reinforcing the garrison in Ulster.

From this it was evident that the only thing to do was to hope that in the event of trouble the outlying troops would be able to reach Belfast in time, a point on which I was very doubtful, as although a railway programme had been worked out it was not at all certain that the engine-drivers and other railway officials could be depended upon.

Arrangements had also been made to concentrate the R.I.C. throughout Ulster on various points so as to ensure garrisons of strengths sufficient to put up a defence if attacked. A lot of nonsense was talked and published in the press to the effect that I had been appointed Military Governor of Belfast or of Ulster. Such a post could only have been created under martial law, and at no time, so far as I am aware, was there any suggestion of such a step, which in the first place would have entailed a very large increase of the garrison, which the Government had no intention of effecting.

On several occasions I saw various representatives of the press, but for obvious reasons was unable to satisfy their curiosity on many points, more especially as from the tone of several of the great "dailies" I knew that anything I might say would be distorted to serve the political trend of the paper. One correspondent

went out of his way to attribute to me a statement that in my opinion the U.V.F. would not fight, which, as it had no foundation whatever, could only have been inserted for the purpose of still further inflaming the already overheated passions of the hotheads of that force. I have often wondered if reporters in their zeal to justify their existence ever pause to consider that their perfervid imagination may cause the death of their fellow-creatures.

The presence of the flotilla of destroyers brought me into pleasant association with Captain C. Wintour, their commanding officer, who was fated to give his life for his country fighting against the Germans early in the Great War. The destroyers patrolled the coast line from Londonderry to Dublin, but, as Wintour explained, it was practically impossible to stop and search every fishing-boat of the hundreds which were daily off the coast. To do so would have required a much closer watch than the number of vessels at his disposal admitted. Once arms were landed, there was little to prevent their disappearance, owing to the small number of Excise and Customs officials on the coast, an opinion concurred in by a senior Customs officer who had been sent from London to look into the matter.

At this time a further apple of discord was thrown into the already seething unrest. This was the appearance of the Irish Volunteers. No one with even the most superficial knowledge of the Irish and their ways could have supposed that the success of the Orangemen in browbeating the feeble Government at Downing Street would escape the notice of the firebrands of the South. During the autumn of 1913, shortly after the announcement of Carson's Provisional Government, steps were taken in Dublin by Professor Macneill to raise a force to support the pretensions of Southern Ireland with the name of "The Irish Volunteers." Fresh impetus was given to this movement by the gun-running at Larne and Donaghadee, and early in May, 1914, reports indicated that its activities were increasing in the North,

under the guidance of two ex-officers of the Regular Army, Colonel M. Moore and Captain White.

I reported to the Government that the presence of these men was a greater menace than that of the U.V.F., because while the latter were under a measure of control by their officers, the same did not apply to the Irish Volunteers, who at any moment might be the cause of serious rioting. I realized, of course, that as the Government were unwilling to assert their authority over the Orangemen, they could hardly be expected to do so over their friends from the South. The presence of these two bodies, antagonistic to each other and to the British Government, made it almost impossible to secure information that was of the slightest value. The intelligence system of the R.I.C. had long become effete and unreliable, and any reports from that quarter were now coloured with the political or religious leanings of its source of origin. It was like working in a thick fog, the only resource being to be ready to hit out at anything one might suddenly bump into.

Two beacon lights stood out in the darkness: one, that according to his declaration in April, 1914, Carson and his U.V.F. would resist with arms any attempt to take possession of the Provisional Government headquarters; the other, that in case of disturbance the Irish Volunteers would break out into an indiscriminate orgy of murder and arson. As the month of May drew to a close the final reading of the Government of Ireland Bill was passed on an undertaking that an amending Bill would be introduced to exclude certain parts of Ulster from the provisions of the original Bill.

The political situation increased the already overstrained tension in the North, and on 19th May, 1914, I again saw Mr. Asquith, and impressed upon him the drift events were taking, especially the fears of the Lord Mayor of Belfast for the safety of his city. My relations with that functionary had been most

cordial during the whole time I was in Belfast. He thoroughly understood that according to the instructions under which I was working the responsibility for calling on the military to assist the police rested with him, and in no way with me. His position was indeed difficult, whatever his political leanings, a point we never discussed, his sole anxiety being his responsibility towards the city of which he was the chief magistrate. The situation was further complicated on account of the few troops in the city, owing to lack of barrack accommodation and the time which must elapse before reinforcements could be brought in. To do so at once might have precipitated an outbreak.

Mr. Asquith decided that in case of serious faction fighting between Orangemen and Nationalists, troops should not intervene and run the risk of having to be extricated, but should isolate the area of the fighting until reinforcements arrived. If Carson proclaimed his Provisional Government the only course was to remain on the defensive and do nothing, Mr. Asquith being of opinion that a proclamation would be issued by Carson which would clear the air and give an indication as to future action. If the Lord Mayor chose to call on the U.V.F. to preserve order, a contingency he had hinted at during one of our interviews, there should be no interference, as the responsibility rested on the Lord Mayor. On a further point, as to what action should be taken if special service companies of the U.V.F. were despatched to Londonderry or other outlying places, Mr. Asquith was of opinion that there was no power to prevent it.

With notes of these heroic instructions in my pocket I returned to Belfast that night.

It was confidently expected that trouble would occur in Belfast, and indeed throughout the North, on the occasion of the passing of the Government of Ireland Bill, through demonstrations by Home Rulers and counter demonstrations by Orangemen, the U.V.F. having been particularly active in sending small detach-

ments here, there, and everywhere about the country during the days immediately preceding the passing of the Bill. On the evening of the 25th May, the fateful day, I arranged to be at the Town Hall with the Lord Mayor. Troops were confined to barracks from 5 p.m. onwards, and every precaution was taken to ensure the fullest use being made of the military, should their intervention be called for either in Belfast or at outlying stations, on the lines indicated in my instructions.

The Roman Catholic clergy used all their influence to prevent any demonstrations or celebrations on the part of their flocks, and the U.V.F. were under orders to remain in their drill halls until called upon by the Lord Mayor. Happily no rioting occurred between Catholics and Protestants in the Falls Road and other insalubrious localities, for in that event the U.V.F. would assuredly have taken the law into their own hands, to the detriment of the Catholics.

Not only in Belfast, but at Londonderry and throughout the North, the night passed in profound peace. The Orangemen had every inducement to keep the peace, in view of the amending Bill which was in preparation to reward them for their rebellious attitude, while the Catholics and Home Rulers (the terms are almost synonymous), being in the minority, wisely refrained from the Irish pastime of trailing their coat-tails, knowing that it would go hardly with them if rioting broke out. I was more afraid of trouble occurring in some village where one party preponderated out of reach of either police or troops.

On 27th May I was able to report that although the tension had been great for the past two days, everything was then quiet, and precautions had been relaxed, but that when the Bill to amend the Home Rule Bill became law, disturbances, if they occurred, would be more in the nature of civil war than of faction fights. Full advantage was taken by the press during this delicate situation to increase the tension by exaggerated or unfounded

reports, *The Times* informing its readers that the women and children belonging to a regiment at Newry had been sent to the Curragh for safety. It so happened that there were no families at Newry. The gentleman who was mainly responsible for such flights of fancy has now risen high in the newspaper world, and is the editor of a daily paper.

While at Belfast I inquired into the legal powers of the Lord Mayor and Council to preserve order under conditions such as those which faced them on 25th May. These powers were ludicrously inadequate. Under certain Acts the Council could make regulations for the prevention of obstruction in the streets, but were powerless to prevent marches or processions of organized or unorganized bodies. In 1886 a Commission appointed to inquire into the serious rioting which had taken place in that year expressed the following view :—

“ We are most decidedly of opinion that summary power should be given to the person having the responsibility of keeping the Queen’s peace in the town of Belfast to prevent all processions through the town, accompanied by bands and banners, if any such proceedings should be, in his opinion, calculated to lead to a breach of the peace.”

No notice, however, was taken of this up to the time I found myself in Belfast. It is, therefore, not surprising if the Lord Mayor, finding that he had no legal power to control the U.V.F. in his city, should have seriously contemplated the expedient of calling that force to his aid, more especially since the police, acting under instructions from Dublin, made no attempt to enforce their right to stop persons with arms and to demand their licences.

There being no apparent reason for further special disturbances beyond the smouldering embers of unrest upon which the populace of Ireland, North and South, have thriven from time immemorial, I returned to my legitimate work early in June.

On 21st July, 1914, the abortive conference took place at

Buckingham Palace, and on 24th July I received a note from Mr. Asquith directing me to proceed to Belfast at once. There was to be no change from the former policy, troops were to "sit tight" and make no moves of any kind. If a Provisional Government was proclaimed the consequential proclamation by Carson would be awaited to enable the Cabinet to determine their next move. A more thoroughly unsatisfactory position for any soldier it is hard to imagine, but the open support of the Carsonites by certain senior officers on the active list of the Army made it imperative in my view to see the business through no matter where it might lead.

After a few days in Belfast I made a tour through the outlying districts during which news came to hand of the gun-running by the National Irish Volunteers at Howth, a village on the northern promontory of Dublin Bay, on Sunday, 26th July. From the openly expressed intentions of the Southern Irish to take a leaf out of Sir E. Carson's book, and to arm their adherents, the affair created no surprise to those who had any acquaintance with conditions in Ireland. The difference between the operations of the N.I.V. and the U.V.F. was that the former carried out their exploit in broad daylight instead of taking advantage of darkness like their brethren in the North.

On the morning of the 26th July, 1914, a yacht ran alongside the jetty at Howth, where it was met by a considerable body of the Irish Volunteers, who armed themselves from the contents of the boat, loading up the remainder of the cargo into waiting motor cars, such police and coastguards who were on the spot being threatened with violence if they interfered. In the meantime news of the occurrence had come through to Dublin, and Mr. Harrell,* the Assistant Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, an able and experienced officer, determined in default of instruc-

* William Vesey Harrell, C.B., C.B.E. H.M. Inspector of Prisons in Ireland, 1808. Assistant-Commissioner, Dublin Metropolitan Police, 1902-1914.

tions to act on his own responsibility. The Under-Secretary, Sir James Dougherty, to whom reference has already been made, made no move until the whole business was over.

In view of the reversal of the decision of the Northern Courts by the Court of the King's Bench in the test case under the Arms Proclamation already mentioned, there was now no question as to the illegality of the Irish Volunteers' action. Collecting a few men of the Dublin Police, and requisitioning two companies of infantry belonging to the King's Own Scottish Borderers, Harrell met the Volunteers on their way back to Dublin. After a parley the police, assisted by the troops, began to disarm the gun-runners but only succeeded in securing a few rifles, the majority of the Volunteers scattering across country, and two soldiers being wounded in the affray. As the troops marched back to barracks through the slums they were set upon by the Dublin mob and a considerable number of the soldiers injured by stones, bottles, and other missiles. The situation became so serious that the officer in command was at length compelled to check the attack on his men by recourse to firearms, with the result that some forty persons were hit, of whom three were killed. It is difficult to see what other course under the circumstances was open to the officer in command. More than a quarter of his men had been injured, and the bonds of discipline must have been strained to breaking-point by the impulse of the men to take the law into their own hands under such uncalled-for provocation.

But it was not upon the soldiers, but upon Mr. Harrell that the Government, egged on by their Irish supporters, vented their spleen. Sir James Dougherty, the responsible authority, having issued no instructions until after the event, Harrell could not be accused of exceeding these instructions. A Royal Commission, however, under the chairmanship of Lord Shaw of Dunfermline, found the scapegoat for the Government, and Mr. Harrell was dismissed from his appointment for having exceeded his powers in

calling out the military. A more disgraceful exhibition of weakness on the part of a Government it would be hard to find in history. The natural result was that the already shaken morale of the Irish Police, a force in which the acceptance of responsibility had for long not been a strong point, was broken for all time. Years afterwards I saw evidences of this, the Harrell case being pointed to as the reward of an official who endeavoured to carry out an obvious duty. It is satisfactory to know that before long Mr. Harrell obtained a good post in civil life, where his abilities were recognized and recompensed.

On the evening of 29th July I returned to Belfast from the West, and found that the naval flotilla had disappeared, and that two battalions were on their way to their permanent stations outside Ulster, in consequence of the European crisis. A few days later I said good-bye to Ireland, as I hoped, for ever, and took up my post as Adjutant-General to Field-Marshal Sir John French, commanding the Expeditionary Force.

I have often been asked what would have happened in Ulster if the war had not intervened. I do not know. When going about the country outside Belfast during the summer of 1914 it would seem from the reports of the police and soldiers that the state of feeling between Catholics and Protestants was improving. As an example, I was told that whereas formerly a fight would certainly have broken out in consequence of a cry of "To hell with the Pope" in the bar of a public-house, as time went on the Protestant battle-cry was met with "To hell with Carson," followed by showers of the forcible expletives for which the Irish are renowned, but not necessarily by broken heads. Then again, many men on both sides told me that they wished to goodness that things would settle down, so that they could get on with their business. Of course, in an inflammable atmosphere like that of Ireland, even when passions are not stirred by some grievance, real or imaginary,

it is as impossible to foretell when trouble may break out as it is to discover the actual, as distinct from the apparent, causes.

In the North, Belfast was the centre of all trouble, and in travelling through the country one noticed the change of feeling directly that city was out of sight. In Londonderry the opposing factions were so evenly balanced that respect, or fear, of the one for the other tended to neutralize their activities. A fruitful source of trouble in both towns were the annual celebrations of the Battle of the Boyne and the raising of the Siege of Londonderry. Far be it from me to advocate the non-observance of great historical events, but these two celebrations, judging by resulting casualties, partake far more of the nature of exhibitions for the trailing of Protestant coat-tails for the Catholics to tread on than of thanksgivings to the Almighty for mercies received, which presumably was the original intention of marking the anniversaries. The Commission appointed to inquire into the rioting in Belfast in 1886 seems to have had the same opinion.

It was an intense relief to me to be quit of a position which not only was purposely ill-defined, but which, owing to the inability of the Government to decide on a definite line of policy towards men who were ostentatiously seeking to defend their political aims by force of arms, might at any moment have obliged me to take action resulting in bloodshed.

The troops looked on with amused indifference at the warlike preparations of the Ulstermen, and I had no more fear that the soldiers would be the aggressors in any conflict than that they would fail to carry out their duty if called upon. It was otherwise with the combustible elements of which the U.V.F. were composed, many of whom were drawn from the rowdy classes of Belfast, and who, though under excellent control, might not be able to resist a favourable opportunity of proving their powers. It was a dangerous game which their leaders were playing, and one which the merest accident might have turned into a bloody tragedy. This was my

one anxiety during the time I spent in the North of Ireland, lest the blood of the soldiers for whom I was responsible should be spilt in a useless encounter with fanatical enthusiasts.

That the men of the North should have objected to being under the domination of their Southern countrymen is quite natural to anyone knowing anything of the South and its people, and on that point I was in full sympathy with them, but never could I bring myself to agree with the methods employed. So long as the British Constitution remains what it is, and though for long centuries it has been curiously unsuccessful in governing the Irish, I am unable to see eye to eye with those who appeal to arms in order to enforce claims which they are unable to secure by constitutional means. It is true that such methods may succeed, as was evidenced by the Sinn Feiners in 1922, but the example set by the inhabitants of Northern and Southern Ireland for totally different objects can only, I believe, lead to the disruption of the Empire, and encourage appeals to force by those who are unable to achieve their aims under the powers of the Constitution.

My excuse for these remarks of a personal nature is that I was occasionally accused of leaning towards the policy of the Governments who were in power at the time I was in Ulster, and later in Southern Ireland. Nothing is further from fact. So far as the political government of Ireland was concerned I was entirely indifferent, having no interest of any kind in the island. The policy I did advocate, whether applicable to the North or to the South, was "Govern or get out," and that is exactly what in 1914 Mr. Asquith would not do. Whether Mr. Lloyd George in electing the less heroic alternative in 1922 when dealing with the South may have hit upon a solution of the problem which for so many centuries had baffled his predecessors in office, time alone will show.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON arriving in London I reported for duty at the Hotel Metropole, where Sir John French had established his headquarters. After the uncongenial atmosphere of Ulster it was a veritable home-coming to find myself among friends, many of them of long standing: the Chief of the General Staff of the Expeditionary Force, Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Murray, with Henry Wilson* as his assistant, and Sir William Robertson† the Quartermaster-General, all of whom I had worked with in the War Office. My own little Staff consisted of Colonel A. Cavendish, Assistant Adjutant-General, with Major Childs and Captain E. Segrave as Deputy-Assistant Adjutants-General, and Captain V. Davis, R.A. (S.R.), my A.D.C. The Provost-Marshal was Colonel V. Bunbury, who, when incapacitated through ill-health in 1915, was succeeded by Brigadier-General Horwood. Colonel P. Woodhouse held the appointment of Director of Medical Services, Colonel "Tuckey" O'Donnell, who afterwards became Director of Medical Services in India, being his deputy. When we arrived in France, Woodhouse established his office on the Lines of Communication, O'Donnell joining General Headquarters on 19th August to be my guide, philosopher and friend in all matters pertaining to the medical department, and a more level-headed, cheery individual under all conditions it would be hard to find, or one who could get things done more quickly.

Under the organization in force at the outbreak of war the 3rd Echelon of G.H.Q. constituted the great office of the Adjutant-General at the base. It would have been impossible to have loaded up G.H.Q. with the number of clerks and masses

* Field-Marshal Sir Henry H. Wilson, Bart., G.C.B. (1864-1922). Colonel of the Royal Irish Rifles and Colonel Commandant of the Rifle Brigade. Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1918-1922. M.P. for North Down, 1922.

† Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, Bart., G.C.B., G.C.M.G. Colonel of the Royal Scots Greys. Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1915-1918. General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Great Britain, 1918-1919.

of documents belonging to all the soldiers in the field, or to have controlled the reinforcement camps from a distance, and therefore this office was established in the first instance at Havre, under the command of Major-General Sir Edward Graham, the Deputy Adjutant-General. At the outbreak of war it consisted of about two hundred officers and clerks. I shall have occasion to refer later to the work carried out by the 3rd Echelon.

The duties of an Adjutant-General, whether in the field or at the War Office, while absorbingly interesting to those whose hearts are in the work, are, like those of the Quartermaster-General's branch, of little interest to the man in the street ; nor, perhaps, when he reads in his daily papers of great battles having been won does he appreciate the contribution to victory by the two administrative Staffs. In the field the work of the Adjutant-General's branch of the Staff is concerned with the organization of new units, drafts to replace casualties, discipline, including the Provost branch and prisons in the field, martial, military and international law, medical and sanitary matters, including the removal and care of the wounded, the chaplain's department, the registration of graves, control of the stationery and printing establishment, and to some extent questions of finance.

While the Quartermaster-General of an Army has his stores and workshops for the upkeep of the fighting troops, the Adjutant-General has to keep an equivalent in the shape of a large office in rear of the armies to handle and deal with the documents which accompany each man into the field, so that casualties can be quickly and accurately traced and reported to the War Office ; to take on the strength reinforcements, both of officers and men, and to despatch them to replace casualties at the front ; to keep a record of all decisions given, so as to ensure an identical system on routine matters throughout the Army ; and to carry on with the War Office and districts at home the volume of correspondence inseparable from the presence of large forces in the field. The Adjutant-

General who is with the Commander-in-Chief takes his decisions on important questions, passing them to his deputy in charge of the base office for record, and if necessary for communication to the Army, if this has not already been done in orders published at G.H.Q.

Very few, even among those in high command in the field, had any idea either of the volume or importance of the work performed by the 3rd Echelon at the base. As the armies grew so did the 3rd Echelon, which, beginning the war with a personnel of two hundred, grew eventually to a figure of close on four thousand, most of whom were officers and men incapacitated from active work.

Would-be reformers occasionally pressed for the abolition of this great office or for its transference to England, on the ground that neither in France nor Germany was such an institution to be found. Such critics did not realize that France and Germany were waging war in their own countries and making use of organizations which were merely expansions of their peace machines, in the same way that if the war had taken place on English soil our War Office and the regimental districts would have rendered the formation of a 3rd Echelon unnecessary. The objection to the transference of this office to England, and the handling of all reinforcements on that side of the Channel, was that at any time cable communication might be cut, and the presence of hostile submarines close the Channel to transports for an indefinite time, a point on which the Admiralty seemed always rather nervous. With reinforcements in the oversea base depots under control of the 3rd Echelon they were despatched to the front directly the number of casualties was known, whereas to have demanded them from England must under the most favourable conditions have entailed a delay of at least a week.

Sir John French, with Murray, Robertson, and a few other Staff officers, had crossed by Boulogne on the afternoon of the 14th

August, on the morning of which day I reached Havre with the members of my Staff, and went on by motor to Amiens. The country lay smiling in the summer sunshine, and as we drove through the small towns and villages children threw flowers into the cars till we looked more like a carnival procession than bent on the grim realities of war. At one village where we stopped for lunch the Mayor and a deputation came to bid us welcome and God-speed, the presence of British soldiers evidently banishing doubts that our country might not throw her sword into the scale, doubts which, if rumour was true, were very real during the opening days of the month.

We reached Le Cateau on 16th August and were billeted at the small inn, a rough-and-ready somewhat noisy establishment, but quite comfortable for all intents and purposes. Beyond arranging with O'Donnell for the detrainment of certain hospitals at near railheads and the formation of a new brigade, the 19th, from units originally detailed for work on the Lines of Communication, my Staff had not much to do, except to take a general look round and to avoid getting in other people's way. If there are two attributes for a Staff officer more important than others they are to be always cheery, and never to assume an air of fussy activity when there is in reality very little to do.

I do not propose to touch on the events of the war about which much has been, and more will be, written as time goes on, but merely to refer here and there to such matters as came directly under my notice in the position I held under the Commander-in-Chief.

We had not been at Le Cateau many hours before Childs and I were reminded of our unpleasant experiences in Ulster. The orders issued at the instance of the General Staff against the presence of newspaper correspondents at the front were for obvious reasons very strict throughout the whole area occupied by our Army. Sitting in the dining-room of the inn at Le Cateau, Childs

thought he recognized on the other side of a partition a familiar voice which, on his going round to look, he found belonged to an old acquaintance of Belfast days who, as the correspondent of a London paper, had habitually allowed his imagination to colour his facts. Of course this gentleman had no pass or permission to be up at the front, and was packed off to the rear without further ado.

On 23rd August news came through from advanced G.H.Q. at Bavai that our troops were heavily engaged in and around Mons, and that evening the Army commenced its retreat. The heavy fighting on 24th, in which the battalions of the 5th Division who had been with me in Ulster took part, and which continued through the 25th, made it necessary to improvise transport for the wounded who began to flow into Le Cateau. The personnel for six ambulance trains had been mobilized and despatched with the Expeditionary Force, but the trains themselves were made up with rolling stock belonging to the French railways, and at the time of the retreat only two were available, each composed of a few passenger coaches and luggage vans fitted with the Brechôt iron frames for lying-down cases. A third train became available during the course of the retreat. At one time during the 25th August we felt a good deal of anxiety as to the fate of No. 2 train, which had gone towards Aulnoye to pick up its freight of wounded, but it eventually came through safely. Supply trains returning empty were used to the fullest extent, but the fussiness and nerve strain of the French railway officials at certain stations increased the existing difficulties considerably, trains being rushed off before being fully loaded.

During the 24th and 25th it became increasingly evident that the toll exacted by modern war was going to be far heavier than we had been led to expect, and that the difficulties of the situation as regards the evacuation of the wounded would become more and more involved so long as the Army was in retreat. The move of the sea bases from the northern to the western ports of

France, by increasing the length of time taken by the ambulance trains on their journeys, also diminished the already overtaxed resources at our disposal.

A considerable amount of hospital stores and equipment had been detrained at Busigny, a few miles south of Le Cateau, all of which had to be loaded up and got away to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. On 26th General Headquarters left Le Cateau, moving gradually south on successive days till it reached Melun on 3rd September. Owing to the constant and uninterrupted fighting at the front it was impossible to get accurate returns of casualties giving the names and other particulars of those killed and wounded, nor was it to be expected, although a rough estimate could be made of the number of reinforcements required. Up to the evening of 26th August the casualties reached a total of nearly 15,000, of whom over 9,000 were shown as missing, the heaviest proportion being in the 2nd Army Corps, commanded by General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, on whom fell the most severe fighting. Reinforcements to meet a part of these casualties were waiting in the base depots at Nantes and St. Nazaire, but until a pause of at least twenty-four hours could be reckoned on in some definite locality it was impossible to order them up.

The weather, which was close and hot, added an extra trial to the endurance of our troops, especially those called up from the Reserve, who had had no time to harden after their return from civil life, but there was no sign of any loosening of discipline or want of spirit. A stolid, grim determination was prevalent among the men and a cheery heartiness among the officers, most of whom were carrying rifles belonging to overtired men in order to give them some relief, the mounted officers loaning their horses to some exhausted comrade. If the hot weather was an extra trial to the troops during the twelve days of that historic retreat, it was a god-send to the wretched inhabitants, who in places literally littered the roadsides on their pilgrimage to safety from the homes from which

they had been driven. To my mind nothing is so sad in war as the plight of those who happen to live in the track of contending hosts, and who, poor creatures, are probably ignorant of the why and wherefore of the horrible convulsion. Years afterwards I often wished that the objector to military service could have seen with his own eyes the plight of those poor wretches, for then perhaps, even if devoid of patriotism, he might have nerved himself to strike a blow to save those dependent on him from the possibility of a like fate.

At Compiègne, where G.H.Q. remained for two days, evidences were plentiful of the strain imposed on the troops, more especially those of the 2nd Corps. Small packets of men and single stragglers emerged all day long from the forest, some so worn out from fatigue and want of sleep as to be almost unconscious of their surroundings; others, especially when under control of an officer or N.C.O., while equally exhausted, plodding along without any clear notion of where they were or whither they were going. It made one's heart bleed to witness the plight to which they were reduced. And yet all they required was rest and food to make them ready and eager to show the Bosch what the British soldier can do when the odds against him are within reason. What I saw during the retreat, and it was but a fraction, increased the belief I had learned as a regimental officer, that no troops in the world excel the British soldier for dogged endurance and recuperative power. May faddists never introduce a system to undermine our national characteristics!

Murray and Robertson had a very much heavier task, by reason of their duties all this time, than fell to my lot. At Noyon I was eyewitness of a scene so characteristic of my old friend, Henry Wilson, that it is worth relating. A long, dark room—a school, I think—had been commandeered as the Headquarter office, each of us having a table or two round the walls. Murray, who for the last five days had been severely taxed day and night

with a crushing weight of anxiety and practically no sleep, was sitting at a table looking over messages from the front when he suddenly dropped forward in a dead faint. Our Headquarter medical officer, Major Cummins,* with some Staff officers, carried him to a bench and applied restoratives, while Henry Wilson walked slowly up and down the long room with that comical, whimsical expression on his face habitual to him, clapping his hands softly together to keep time as he chanted in a low tone, "We shall never get there; we shall never get there." As he passed me, I said: "Where, Henri?" and he chanted on: "To the sea, to the sea, to the sea." It was just his way to keep up everybody's spirits, some of the younger members of the Staff not always remembering the golden rule of appearing cheerful under any and every turn of circumstance.

In years to come I was thrown much in contact with Henry Wilson, or "Henri," as he was called by his intimates, and learned to admire his brilliant qualities and lovable disposition. When we were both Directors in the War Office we had been quite good friends, but never intimate, the shadow of Ulster being between us. He knew that while I was absolutely indifferent to the political aspect of the case I had a very decided opinion in regard to people who took up arms against the King's Government, and disagreed with his open opposition to the Government while holding an important official position. This, however, made no difference to our friendship, which on my part ripened into affection long before his untimely end at the hands of assassins from the land of which he was so bright an ornament. It was during the war that the seeds of our close friendship were sown. However dark the situation might be, Henry Wilson never lost his cheery optimism or failed to wring a smile from the most serious-minded pessimist by his quaint quips on persons and

* Colonel S. L. Cummins, C.B., C.M.G. Professor, University College, South Wales and Monmouthshire.

things, his admiration and affection for our good friends the French, whose language he spoke fluently, being another tie between us.

On 31st August G.H.Q. was located at Dammartin, a small town on high ground, about eighteen miles from Paris as the crow flies. A house with a pleasant garden had been told off for the A.G.'s Staff, from which at night the glow of the lights of Paris could be seen away to the south-west. On 1st September some excitement was caused by shells bursting on a ridge to the north of the town, and reports came in that Uhlans had got between G.H.Q. and the Army. The troops attached to G.H.Q. were a battalion of the Cameron Highlanders and the Commander-in-Chief's escort of the Irish Horse.

On the evening of 1st September, while we were having our evening meal in the garden of our billet, an old Frenchman who had been left by the owner to look after the place came out carrying a large tricolour flag, which he unrolled for our inspection, and then rolling it carefully up buried it in a corner of the garden. It was the banner of the local branch of the veterans of the 1870 war, of whom he was one. When we had finished our food I strolled over with one of my Staff towards the building occupied by the General Staff to find out if any news had come in. In one of the narrow cobbled streets a large motor with headlights on nearly ran over us both. In it was Colonel Macdonogh,* the Director of Intelligence. He shouted out that he was off to Paris, and disappeared along the deserted street. On reaching the General Staff offices we found the place as silent as the grave, and after some hunting about unearthed a stray orderly, who informed us that the C.-in-C. and the Irish Horse had left some four hours ago, followed by the whole of the Staff. We then strolled up to where the Cameron Highlanders had been bivouacked, and found

* Lieut.-General Sir George M. W. Macdonogh, K.C.B., K.C.M.G. Adjutant-General to the Forces, 1918-1922.

the last half-battalion preparing to march for Lagny. It being evident that someone had forgotten to pass round word of the move, the only thing to do was to trek as soon as possible, especially as we had at that time no information as to the cause of the firing that had been going on a few miles away.

The drive to Lagny was exciting. At Villeneuve we fell right into the middle of the headquarters of the Flying Corps doing all they knew to clear out to the south in the darkness, the road in consequence being crowded with every kind of vehicle. A few miles further on, at Compans, the car was suddenly held up at a railway crossing by an unkempt, wild-looking French Territorial soldier, who, pushing the muzzle of his rifle, with his finger on the trigger, into the chest of my French orderly, who was sitting next to the chauffeur, excitedly demanded the countersign. Heaven alone knows by what stretch of imagination this defender of his country supposed that we could possibly know the local password, but nothing would persuade him to let us through or to remove his rifle from Detry's chest. While we were arguing with the man in our collective best French, a British motor cyclist came by. We called to him, and he shouted out the countersign in a voice loud enough to be heard by everybody in the vicinity, which quite satisfied the Territorial, who let us pass on our way to Lagny.

On 3rd September G.H.Q. was at Melun, at which place it remained until the 8th, advanced G.H.Q. being at Mortcerf. The Army reached the line Villiers-sur-Morin—Fontenay on the 4th, this position thus marking the limit of a retreat that will live as one of the greatest feats of arms in the history, not of our own country only, but of the armies of the world. The few days' comparative rest afforded to the troops gave the longed-for opportunity to hurry up reinforcements from St. Nazaire, and to repair, so far as circumstances admitted, the damage to personnel and material, which was far greater than people in England

imagined. One distinguished General who visited G.H.Q. from London a few weeks later spoke of the retreat as if it had been a kind of slow, orderly retirement, such as may be seen at Aldershot during a training season, that being the impression he had culled from the accounts he had read.

Some units were reduced to mere shadows of their original strengths both in officers and men, and the loss of equipment had been considerable. For some days it was impossible to arrive at even an approximate estimate of the losses, because many men who could not be accounted for gradually turned up, either from other units to which they had attached themselves, or from wandering about in the country, having lost their way. It was many weeks before those who had been wounded were all accounted for. Some, especially as the fighting moved nearer to Paris, found their way into French trains, and were eventually traced to hospitals in the extreme south and west of France. Others, mostly officers, were hidden away in Paris through the well-intentioned but misguided energies of ladies who drove out in their motor cars, and picking up any officer they might find who was not very severely wounded whisked him off to their flat or to some small private hospital in Paris, without, in many cases, making the least effort to report the matter to the Army authorities. Several such cases in which the officer himself did not communicate with his relations at home caused much anxiety and unnecessary trouble.

From the nature of the fighting, and the fact that the Army was continuously in retreat, many wounded fell into the hands of the enemy, in spite of which the strain on the medical services was very great, both with the Army and on the Lines of Communication, yet never beyond the power of the organization to cope with successfully. In view of all that occurred, the decision to leave the Director of Medical Services, Surgeon-General Woodhouse, on the lines of communication was fully justified, owing to the

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enormous amount of reorganization required in the back areas, consequent on the retrograde movement of the Army at the outset of the campaign and the sudden transfer of the bases to the western ports of France. At the front, for some weeks, the medical organization became a matter of rapid and temporary expedients to meet the ever-changing situation, a task which O'Donnell carried through with singular success, especially as he was often cut off from communication with his Director on the Lines of Communication.

By the 7th September the ranks had been replenished with every available man, and as, by the light of experience, I had revised in my own mind the estimates of casualties which had been laid down before the war, indents on the War Office for the future were considerably in excess of preconceived ideas. While nothing could have been more smooth than the working of the three divisions of the Staff at G.H.Q., both Robertson and I found that the system under which the Inspector-General of Communications was subject to the direct orders of the C.-in-C., rather than through the medium of the C.-in-C.'s principal Staff officers, was not workable in war. This affected Robertson in regard to stores and material, myself in regard to men, indents being sent to the War Office by the I.G.C. as well as by the A.G.'s office at the base, with the consequent resulting confusion at both ends. Very soon after the war started this system, which had at the time of its conception been opposed by many officers who had had administrative experience, was changed to that which held good to the end of the war, under which an I.G.C. takes his orders from the Staff at G.H.Q. in the same way as an officer commanding one of the larger formations at the front.

On the 8th September G.H.Q. moved forward in the wake of the Army to Coulommiers, and on the 12th to Fère-en-Tardenois, a little old-fashioned village in the beautiful wooded country south of the Aisne. My quarters and office were in a house at the side

of the village green, which, from photographs and papers left lying about, had evidently been occupied by a Frenchman and a *chère amie* from across the Rhine, who no doubt sent useful information to her friends in Germany while she enjoyed the hospitality of her national enemy. It was at Fère-en-Tardenois, during the heavy fighting on the Aisne, that I had doubts whether our medical organization would stand the strain, and even that ever cheerful Irishman "Tuckey" O'Donnell at times looked serious.

The trouble lay in the general dislocation and consequent slow service of the railways, due to damage done by the Germans during their retirement, and the distance from our bases. The line was a single one, and the railway telegraph system had not been repaired. The wounded from the front were collected in Clearing Hospitals at Braisne, Fère-en-Tardenois, and Oulchy-Breny, whither they were brought in ambulances, empty supply wagons, or motor ambulances, a few of which invaluable conveyances made their first appearance in the front areas at this time, two being allocated to each Division with a reserve of eight at G.H.Q.

Towards the end of September the Quartermaster-General decided that supply lorries could no longer be used for the transport of wounded, but the difficulty was overcome by the provision of fifty Ford cars fitted with ambulance bodies which were procured in Paris and sent up to the front. This welcome reinforcement admitted of fifteen motor ambulances being told off for each Division, assisted by a convoy working from G.H.Q. Major Evans, R.A.M.C., was detailed to organize these M.A. convoys, the first of which got to work on 28th September. A great difficulty arose through the uncertainty of the arrival of the daily trains, and the consequent overcrowding of the accommodation for the wounded awaiting transport at railheads. At Fère-en-Tardenois the only accommodation was a building near the station and the village church, placed at our disposal by the *curé*, who was a splendid example of practical Christianity.

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The only time while I was in France that I had occasion to fear any breakdown in the arrangements to deal with the wounded was during the early days on the Aisne, and those fears were never justified, thanks to the resource and capacity of the officers of the Medical Service. As the railway service improved, hospital trains arrived as far as possible each day at a place, indicated to Divisions, to which sick and wounded were sent ; but as only six trains were available during the Aisne fighting, and the journey to and from St. Nazaire could not be covered under four days, it was impossible to count on more than one train a day. Empty supply trains were taken up for the less serious cases, the men being made as comfortable as possible with straw, stretchers, blankets, etc. People in England, anxious to find fault, started the cry that the outbreak of tetanus which at this time showed itself among the wounded was due to the straw on which the men were laid in buildings and in the trains, also that cattle trucks were taken up for the conveyance of wounded. Neither of these assertions had any foundation. The tetanus was proved on investigation to have been contracted on the battlefield, and was soon held in check by an anti-tetanus serum, while as regards trains which were taken up on emergencies for the wounded, only luggage vans and closed trucks were made use of.

It was eventually found expedient to change the name of the Clearing Hospitals to Casualty Clearing Stations, because certain people in England could not understand why, if the place was called a hospital, men should not remain there till cured. All through the war the Medical Services were the butt of ignorant faddists who thought that they could do the work so much better themselves, individuals whom the old Russian General Suwarrow, the man who chased the French out of Italy in 1799, would have described as "*scribentismi*."

It was while at Fère-en-Tardenois that I was shown a memorandum purporting to be a proposal that the Red Cross

Society should take over all wounded from the Clearing Hospitals, and handle them with civilian personnel from then onwards. Mercifully for the Army, nothing came of it, but it shows to what lengths people ignorant of the conditions of war will go.

The transfer of the British Army from the Aisne to the North commenced on 3rd October, G.H.Q. moving to Abbeville on the 8th, and to St. Omer on the 12th, where it remained until the spring of 1916.

About the same time as the northward move took place the Indian Army Corps began to disembark at Marseilles, concentrating about Orleans. In common with other branches of the Staff at G.H.Q., two British officers of the Indian Army were attached to the A.G.'s branch for the purpose of smoothing over any difficulties that might arise owing to the difference in organization and procedure between the British and Indian Services. The Indian troops first began to take their place in the battle line between Estaires and La Bassée at the end of October.

It was in a way a curious coincidence that of all places in the North of France, St. Omer should have been selected as the General Headquarters of the British Army, for probably no inland town in that locality has closer associations with our country, associations going back to the days when St. Dunstan and the less mythical Thomas à Becket visited the place, and Julius Cæsar cut trees in the Forest of Clairmarais hard by to build ships for the invasion of Britain, an example followed by Napoleon when bent upon the same project ; this same forest also providing much wood for our Army during the war.

I often wonder how many of the thousands of officers and men who lived at different times in and around St. Omer interested themselves in the history of the old town which, named after a holy man of the seventh century, saw the tide of war ebb and flow round its walls from the time of Charlemagne to our own day. In 1231 St. Louis of France and his wife, Blanche of Castille, wor-

shipped in the church of Notre Dame, the gateway through which they entered being the same as that through which our own Catholic soldiers passed on their way to Mass. This church, too, or its predecessor on the same site, is celebrated by Charles Kingsley as the first meeting-place of Hereward the Wake and Torfrida of Arle, who afterwards became his wife. Curious, too, that on the Headquarter Staff of our Army should have been a descendant of the said Hereward bearing the same name.

Between the 12th and 17th centuries St. Omer fell under the rule of Burgundians, Austrians and Spaniards, until in 1678 it was finally annexed to France by Louis XIV after the defeat of the Spaniards at Cassel by the Duke of Orleans. The place was then fortified by Vauban, part of the old bastioned trace remaining to this day. The most striking feature of the town, the great ruined tower of St. Bertin, is a remnant of the monastic church built at the end of the 14th century, in which, in 1439, was held a Chapter of the Golden Fleece. The monastery and its church were destroyed in the French Revolution.

At the end of the 16th century English Jesuits erected a college in St. Omer, which was rebuilt in 1726, and was celebrated far and wide for its learning, among those who benefited by its education being Daniel O'Connell, the Irish Liberator. In 1803 Bonaparte turned the place into a military hospital, a use to which it was again converted in 1914. It was doubtless the presence of the English Jesuits that decided James II to seek an asylum in St. Omer for a time after his flight from England.

Most people who have been at St. Omer will probably remember a rather striking bronze statue in the Place du Vinquai of a country lass punting a boat, the inscription setting forth that the statue immortalizes the deed of a certain Jacqueline Robins, who, forcing her boat through the lines of the besiegers in 1710, was the means of raising the siege and saving the town. Unfortunately the story is an historical myth. St. Omer was not besieged

in 1710, and the Jacqueline Robins of that day was a wealthy bourgeoisie, the wife of an ex-officer of the King's Grey Musketeers. It is sad that the Andomarois in 1884 did not verify the traditions of their beautiful old town before erecting a statue which, though pleasing to the eye, is historically a fraud. To come down to modern times, the Great War has enabled St. Omer to add yet another name to the roll of honour of its townsmen in the person of Marshal Pétain, the hero of Verdun, who was educated at the St. Bertin Institute.

It did not take long to settle down in these old-world surroundings, my own quarters and those of some of my Staff being in the Rue St. Bertin, a short distance from the Chief's house. The rest of my Staff and the offices were in a street behind.

The first Battle of Ypres opened a few days after our arrival at St. Omer, with its desperate fighting and consequent anxieties to those whose duty compelled them to remain quietly awaiting the news which hour by hour filtered in from the front, and, so far as my particular duties were concerned, impatient to send the much needed reinforcements to the hardly pressed troops which I was powerless to do, every available man in the base depots having been used up and the flow from England being slow and intermittent.

In every war certain people delight in mud-slinging at the Staff officer, holding him up as an individual who lives a life of ease, safety, and comfort, while his comrades are fighting for their lives. Such ideas, so far as my experience goes, are the outcome of ignorance and possible jealousy. I have no desire to add to the controversy beyond saying that I would gladly have exchanged for employment offering greater freedom and less monotony the constant never-easing strain, day in day out with never a break in the hourly effort, too often unsuccessful, to provide for the needs of the men at the front. Many of my Staff, as time went on, begged

me to let them go to regimental or staff work at the front. Some I was able to release, others I could not without detriment to the well-being of the Army, there being no officers available with the necessary qualifications to take their places. The most striking example was my indispensable deputy, Sir E. Graham, who from the first to the last day of the war toiled at the treadmill of the 3rd Echelon at the base from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. each day, and often through the night, and who, had I been able to release him, might have gained high distinction in command at the front. Unfortunately for him I knew of no one who could have taken his place without the risk that the machine would have suffered, and through it the Army at large.

It is well that those who desire to draw comparisons between the regimental and the Staff officer should remember that success on the Staff can only be attained after a thorough preparation as a regimental officer both in peace and war, so that when removed from amongst those with whom his earlier life has been passed the Staff officer is able to sympathize with the needs and limitations of his former comrades in their daily and hourly peril. Attempts founded on ignorance to sow dissension, or to seek a cheap popularity, among the various elements of a complicated and delicate organization are not calculated to strengthen a nation's effort in peace or war. The wild statements also current about this time of the presence of women at G.H.Q. were absolutely without foundation, the Provost branch exercising a drastic check on presence of unauthorized visitors.

Being responsible to the Commander-in-Chief that no irregularities took place, and having always before my eyes the scandals of the Mount Nelson Hotel and other resorts on the coast during the South African War, I was determined that there should be no grounds for reflections of that kind on our Army in France, so far as the war zone was concerned. Now and again incidents occurred in villages near the front, or on the Lines of Communica-

tion, but they were invariably discovered, and drastic disciplinary measures meted out. Taking it all in all, the discipline and good behaviour of the forces that Great Britain put into the field were I assert without fear of contradiction, unequalled in the annals of war.

Early in November, 1914, a welcome reinforcement was received from England in the shape of nineteen Territorial battalions, who very soon assimilated themselves to conditions at the front, and proved little inferior to their comrades of the Regulars. It is no exaggeration to say that these nineteen battalions literally saved the very critical situation that existed during that anxious month. The London Scottish, which had been in France for some weeks, were thrown into the fight on 31st October, 1914, losing 34 per cent. of their strength and gaining the special commendation of General Allenby and the Commander-in-Chief. Unfortunately, under the Territorial organization no provision had been made for reinforcements, so that it was some time before the casualties could be replaced.

In studying the effect of heavy losses on units it was curious to notice the difference between the Regulars and the Territorials, a difference due entirely in the earlier days of the war to their composition, and not in any way to want of spirit on the part of either. A Regular unit after heavy punishment maintains the same stolid unconcern which characterizes it under any vicissitudes in barracks or in the field, contenting itself with a few words of rough regret here and there for a pal who will never answer the roll-call again, and a determination to get its own back on the enemy at the first chance. Reinforcements, when they arrive, are looked upon much in the same way as new boys at a school, and in a few days the unit is ready again to do its bit in the same level, unconcerned way as before.

In a Territorial battalion the men for the most part know each other and each other's families in private life, and have many ties

outside their soldiering activities. They are, in fact, a social as well as a military organization, and when suddenly hundreds of their comrades are swept away the shock comes home to them in much greater force than to the professional soldier, whose friendships, as a rule, date from their first entry into barracks. The effect on a Territorial unit is a great wave of grief and depression, which it takes some days to overcome. On the other hand, and for the same reasons, the arrival of reinforcements has a far more exhilarating effect on them than on a Regular unit, if, as was the case in the early days of the war, the drafts are drawn from their own locality. They find old friends, who tell them news of people and things in whom they have personal interests, which helps them to put away the remembrance of the ordeal through which they passed.

As the war progressed this distinction between Regulars and Territorials passed away, the latter not only becoming more hardened to the effects of war, but being reinforced by men unknown to them in civil life. Certain it is that no finer body of men took the field than the original Territorial units, and well did they justify the prescience of their originator, Lord Haldane.

On the 11th November, 1914, that grand old soldier Field-Marshal Lord Roberts arrived on a visit to G.H.Q. At dinner at the Chief's he questioned me closely on the hospital arrangements and on the state of the reinforcements, the failure of which would have been largely mitigated had the politicians listened to his reiterated cry in the past for some form of national training. On the 12th he inspected the Indian troops and caught a chill, to which he succumbed on the 14th. I had the melancholy honour of arranging the little ceremony that took place at the Hotel de Ville where the body lay, troops lining the old cobble-paved *place* to pay a last honour to one whose name had long been endeared to every British soldier. Never have I attended a ceremony more truly in keeping with the passing of a great soldier. The very

simplicity of the old-world surroundings, the troops in their war-worn uniforms, and the sound of our guns away towards Ypres made the occasion one that must live in the memory of every man present. The coffin—placed in a motor ambulance, Sir Pertab Singh, Lord Roberts's old friend of Indian days, sitting beside the chauffeur—was conveyed to Boulogne, and thence to the land the old soldier had served so long and faithfully.

Two days afterwards the Prince of Wales arrived at G.H.Q. to be attached to the different branches of the Staff before going out to a corps at the front. The Prince was, I think, interested in what he saw of the work of the A.G.'s Staff, with its diversity of subjects, from the healthy reinforcements to the care of the wounded, or from the supervision of the chaplains to the disciplining of malefactors.

It was a relief when the situation at the front admitted of the transfer of the A.G.'s office at the base—the 3rd Echelon—to Rouen from Nantes early in November, 1914. Graham found quarters for the various branches in the old Palace of the Archbishops of Rouen, a magnificent mediæval pile just behind the Cathedral. As the war progressed and as the new armies from England, together with the Dominion and Colonial troops, poured into France, representatives from all of whom had to be accommodated, the personnel overflowed from the Palace into forty houses in the vicinity.

It was in the early days at St. Omer that an event occurred which, small in itself, was destined to have far-reaching importance. One of the matters for which the Adjutant-General's Staff is responsible is the burial of the dead and the record of graves. In former wars, when the casualties were comparatively insignificant and time not pressing, the matter was easy and simple, regiments as a rule undertaking the erection of monuments for their fallen comrades. On the retreat little could be done towards marking or recording the resting-places of such

officers and men who were buried, while during the fighting on the Aisne it became evident that nothing but a separate organization devoted solely to this work could overtake what had been left undone, or cope with what was before us in the future. The difficulty was that neither officers nor men could be spared for the purpose, yet I was strongly of opinion that the work was not one to be handed over during the war to any organization outside the Army, from which it could not be separated.

A letter was written to the War Office suggesting the necessity for such an organization, not in any way to assist in the prosecution of the war, but to safeguard the Government when the public should require an account of their stewardship towards the honoured dead, and asking for the necessary financial authority. I had not solved the difficulty of the personnel when one day in October, 1914, my A.D.C. told me that a gentleman, who apparently belonged to the Red Cross, wanted to see me. Into the old-fashioned French bedroom which served as my office came a spare, dark individual, dressed in the uniform of the French Croix Rouge. He explained that he had been working with the French, and was at the moment with General Conneau's cavalry, but wished, if there was an opening, to give his services to his own countrymen. We chatted for some time, and I found that he had had considerable administrative experience and was a fluent French scholar. His memory was better than mine, for it transpired that some forty years before, when we were both small boys, he had been present at a meeting-house of the Plymouth Brethren, to which I had been taken by an aunt, and where I got into difficulties over the ritual, an episode which had evidently impressed him. Before he left my room I had booked him to create an organization to supervise and record the graves of our soldiers. His name was Fabian Ware.* As he felt that he could

* Major-General Sir Fabian A. G. Ware, K.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B. Director of Education, Transvaal and Orange River Colony, 1903. Editor of *The Morning Post*, 1905-1911. Director-General of Graves Registration and Inquiries, 1916-1917. Permanent Vice-Chairman, Imperial War Graves Commission, from 1917.

not leave the French without reasonable notice, we arranged that as he was working in the Aisne area he should do what he could to discover and mark the graves scattered about in that locality. Shortly afterwards he collected a dozen gentlemen with whom he was acquainted, arranged with the British Red Cross for the loan of motor cars, and thus started an organization which developed into the Graves Registration and Inquiries Department, with headquarters at Winchester House, St. James's Square, working under the Adjutant-General at the War Office.

In May, 1917, this organization was merged into "The Imperial War Graves Commission" under a Royal Charter, an institution now known throughout the Empire, and, in the words of the Prime Minister of one of the great Dominions, "an example in itself of Imperial unity and co-operation." It will ever be my pride to remember that it fell to my lot to implant the small seed which has developed into a growth spreading throughout the Empire, and that it was my good fortune to have secured the services of the man to whose untiring devotion the success of this national movement is mainly due.

It was not long after my first meeting with Fabian Ware that fortune kindly put me on the track of another man destined to be a pillar of the A.G.'s Staff until he left the Army for higher responsibilities. During a visit that Sir Eric Geddes, then employed on munition supply at home, paid to G.H.Q., he told me that a younger brother of his, a major in a Territorial battalion training in the North of England, was worth considering for a minor Staff appointment if at any time I was short of likely men. Having come across Eric Geddes during the railway strike of 1912, where he showed to advantage even among the lights of the railway world, it struck me that if his brother was anything like him I might do worse than give the family a trial. At the moment a minor appointment was vacant on my Staff, the main duties being to regulate the clergy, who were by no means so peaceably inclined

towards each other's denominations as one might reasonably expect, and to inquire into and check the applications which poured in for visits to the zone of the armies.

Both these tasks required a good deal of firmness and tact, especially in regard to the visitors whose applications, occasionally on the most flimsy grounds, were often backed by influential personages at home. One or two Regular officers had tried their hands at it not altogether successfully, so on the evening of the day I met Eric Geddes I wired to the War Office asking for the services of Major Auckland Geddes,* who arrived in due course. Before many days had passed I heard nothing more of any trouble in that department ; the only difficulty was that after a time Geddes came to me asking to be allowed to go to the front as he had not enough work to satisfy him, a request he repeated several times, but which happily I had the sense to refuse.

As will be seen later he followed me to the War Office and became my Director of Recruiting, building up the enormous organization that developed into the Ministry of National Service. In the days to come at the War Office, when he was evolving order out of chaos and working far into each night, I could not refrain occasionally from asking him if he had enough work to do, a pleasantry which drew forth a weary smile. Had I acceded to his request in France to leave the Staff it would have been little short of a national disaster, for I know of no other man who could have tackled the question of man-power with any chance of approaching the measure of success achieved by Auckland Geddes.

Once G.H.Q. was established at St. Omer it was possible to reorganize methodically, in the light of experience already gained, the various services for which I was responsible, which had been dislocated by the retreat and the sudden move of the bases to the

* Brigadier-General the Rt. Hon. Sir Auckland Geddes, P.C., G.C.M.G., K.C.B. Director of Recruiting, War Office, 1916-1917. Minister of National Service, 1917-1919. President, Board of Trade, 1919-1920. British Ambassador to the U.S.A., 1920-1924.

west. Even at this time no one, I think, dreamed that the Army was fated to be tied down to long years of stationary warfare, and therefore all plans were worked out on the assumption of an advance sooner or later.

As time went on the increase of the Army in the field and the requirements necessitated by trench warfare caused not only an unprecedented inflation of existing services, but constant new developments in every direction, in none perhaps more than in the Medical Services. Before the Army left the Aisne Sir George Makins* and Sir Anthony Bowlby,† the first of the consulting surgeons to whose skill the Army owes an undying debt of gratitude, arrived in France, Sir George Makins being attached to G.H.Q., and Sir Anthony Bowlby to the Lines of Communication, but later coming up to the front, where among other innovations he organized measures for the immediate treatment of intestinal wounds in Casualty Clearing Stations just in rear of the front line, a step which saved the life of many a man. Among other eminent men who gave their services to our Army in the early days in France was Mr. (now Sir Charles) Valadier, who inaugurated at Boulogne a clinic for the cure of maxillo-facial injuries.

The general and stationary hospitals, both military and those organized by voluntary effort, grew apace from twenty-four in August, 1914, to an eventual figure of seventy-six, the number of beds rising from 9,000 to 97,000. Throughout the war the number of medical officers was never up to the establishment laid down, and as time went on this shortage became a matter of considerable anxiety, the untiring devotion of the overworked doctors alone preventing a breakdown. By the end of 1915 this shortage amounted to two hundred with a wastage of nearly fifty a month.

* Major-General Sir George Makins, G.C.M.G., C.B. President, Royal College of Surgeons.

† Major-General Sir Anthony Bowlby, Bt., K.C.B., K.C.V.O., K.C.M.G. Surgeon-in-Ordinary to the King.

A certain number of medical officers had been lost to the Army during the retreat on account of their remaining with the wounded and being taken prisoners by the enemy, an example not followed by the Germans, who during their retirement to the Aisne invariably left their wounded unattended.

Another fruitful source of wastage was the all too natural inclination of the regimental medical officers to leave their aid posts in order to attend to seriously wounded men in the firing line, a practice occasionally encouraged by regimental and higher commanders. Orders were issued to put a stop to this, not only on account of wastage among the medical personnel, which was difficult to replace, but on humanitarian grounds. The place of a medical officer belonging to a unit, when fighting is in progress, is the regimental aid post to which all wounded are brought before transfer to a Casualty Clearing Station. If a medical officer leaves this post to attend to an officer or man in the firing line, however desperately wounded, he exposes all those who may be brought to the aid post to increased suffering and possible danger by the delay in dressing their wounds. Should he have the misfortune to be killed or wounded, a considerable time may elapse before another medical officer can be found to take his place, so that in a laudable attempt to save one life he may be the cause of the loss of many.

The organization of the motor ambulance convoys, to which reference has been made, was rapidly pushed on by Major Evans, sixteen convoys being on the road by October, 1915. Each convoy consisted of three sections and a workshop unit, the drivers and other personnel being all enlisted men after December, 1914, owing to the unsatisfactory discipline of the drivers of privately owned cars in use before that date. Two British Red Cross convoys retained their own personnel up to the end of 1915, when they either enlisted or were replaced by enlisted men. The local ambulance work at the bases was carried out by cars belonging to

the Red Cross and the Order of St. John, many women being employed as drivers. One small organization, commonly known as the F.A.N.Y.S., was composed entirely of women, and operated in and about Calais from the very early days of the war, doing admirable work.

The former anxiety in regard to a sufficiency of ambulance trains soon disappeared after we reached St. Omer, both on account of the shorter journeys to and from the northern ports, and the increased number of trains on the line, which reached eleven by the end of 1914, twenty during the next twelve months, and forty-one by the end of the war. But even this increased service did not entirely do away with the use of empty supply trains when heavy fighting was in progress. Another mode of conveyance for the very seriously wounded were the ambulance flotillas, the first of which was formed at St. Omer in April, 1915. Eventually five in all were organized to work along the canal system of Northern France to the coast ports, where the cases were transferred straight to the hospital ships.

The Army had not been long in France before it was realized that the sick and slightly wounded who were sent to England were being kept there long after they had become fit for duty. The daily increasing shortage of men made it imperative that every officer and man should return to his place in the ranks without delay, and this led to instructions being issued that only the more severe cases were to go across the Channel. In order to harden men after leaving hospital before rejoining their units, a system of convalescent depots* was started, the first being opened by Colonel Bate, R.A.M.C., in the jute factory at St. Omer. These depots, as time went on, multiplied throughout the back areas in France, and became powerful sources of reinforcement for the Army, accommodation for no fewer than 57,000 men being provided. The same system was later carried out in England.

* Afterwards renamed "Command depots."

Although under command of a medical officer, the convalescent depots were not hospitals in any sense of the word, but camps where men were exercised, well fed, encouraged to go in for games of all kinds, and kept amused by entertainments when the day's work was done.

An order was issued very early in the campaign putting an absolute embargo on the despatch of any officers or men suffering from venereal disease to England. The medical authorities on the Lines of Communication at first demurred, being afraid that the available hospital accommodation might be crowded out, but I was convinced that unless a firm line was taken in regard to such diseases the wastage from them might assume very great proportions. By the end of the war five hospitals had been set aside for the purpose, the conditions in them not being on quite so comfortable a scale as in the ordinary hospitals, and the patients being put to fatigue work as soon as they were fit for it.

In January, 1915, Robertson succeeded Archibald Murray as Chief of the General Staff, Lieut.-General Sir E. Maxwell taking his place as Quartermaster-General, these changes making no difference in the happy relations that prevailed at G.H.Q.

As soon as Havre and Rouen again became firmly established bases during the month of November, Colonel P. Umfreville, who was in charge of the prisons in the field, was able to provide accommodation for those who fell into his hands on lines which I have already referred to as having been carefully thought out in pre-war days, the general policy being that all men would remain in the theatre of war. No better man could have been selected for the thankless appointment. Many a bad character left the prisons a better man and a better soldier, thanks to Umfreville's firm and tactful handling.

Owing to want of accommodation, the first prisons were established on hulks at Havre and Rouen, the men when not on prison routine being employed in loading and unloading stores on

the quays. Later on a part of the Rouen prison was loaned to us by the French, and as the Army grew prison camps were erected in various localities. Umfreville was a man who, had he not been obliged for private reasons to take up the military prison service, would in all probability have risen high as a commander in the field.

In spite of the weather conditions and water-logged trenches, the health of the troops remained good during the early winter of 1914, until, towards the end of November, the disease known as "trench feet" sent up the sick rate to an alarming extent. It resulted from prolonged immersion in the cold water with which the trenches were more or less filled, coupled with the wearing of tight boots or puttees, and was worse in men with bad circulation. Over 20,000 men went down with this scourge, the majority to be cured in a longer or shorter time, according to the severity of the attack, but some to be incapacitated for life. The subject was tackled at once by the medical authorities, and stringent orders issued for the observance of precautions which, if adhered to, effectually prevented the disease. Cases which occurred during the following winters of the war were generally traceable to want of supervision and neglect to carry out the precautions laid down.

On the evening of 22nd April, 1915, I happened to be motoring out in the direction of Ypres when I saw to the north of the road a lot of French soldiers moving across country in a southerly direction. Some were running, some walking, and, from where we were, my A.D.C. and I came to the conclusion that they must be doing some skirmishing exercises in rear of the line held by French Colonial and Territorial troops between Steenstraat and Poelcappelle, north of Ypres. We were soon undeceived. What we were looking at was the retirement of the French in the face of the first gas attack by the Germans, which forced our line back some two miles, and might have led to far-

reaching consequences but for the heroic fight put up by the Canadians, who held on to their trenches in the face of this unexpected terror. No time was lost to find an antidote to what had hitherto been regarded as contrary to the rules of war. Until more effective means of defence against gas had been devised the troops were served out with pads of cotton wool soaked in a solution of bicarbonate of soda, held in place on the mouth and nose by gauze fastenings.

Colonel Cummins, who was placed in charge of the anti-gas services, quickly established a small factory at Calais, where a number of French and Belgian women made the first gas masks—hideous-looking, khaki-coloured bags with talc eye-pieces—which were drawn over the head and tucked into the collar of the coat. Uncomfortable as they were to wear, they afforded considerable protection, and as time went on were replaced by the elaborate mask which now forms part of the soldier's equipment.

In course of time a separate department was built up under the General Staff for gas services, both offensive and defensive, under the charge of Colonel Cummins. I have noticed in a book recently published that members of the Government in London had reason to suspect that the Germans would make use of gas some time before the surprise was burst upon the troops at the front. If there was any truth in this statement the neglect to give a word of warning, so that precautionary measures might have been in readiness, would seem little less than culpable.

At the Washington Conference in 1922 a pious resolution was passed eliminating gas as a weapon of warfare. It will be interesting to observe, when the next war breaks out between civilized nations, whether this touching reliance on national pledges will have greater success than that which was realized by the Rules of War as laid down at The Hague prior to 1914. I am one of those who believe that if war comes every engine of destruction that science can invent will be brought into operation,

and woe betide the nation that hesitates from the outset to make every use of its resources. The days of the lifting of hats, and requests to an enemy to fire first, are unfortunately gone for ever.

Another department for which as Adjutant-General I was responsible and on which it is only necessary to say a few words was that of the chaplains. My sympathy with them, and admiration for the work of many of them, was always tinged with a latent feeling of fear lest by chance I might find myself involved in some doctrinal argument on which a decision might be sought. In preparation for any such conundrum I had armed myself with a reply from Holy Writ itself and proposed to refer any seekers for decisions on such matters to the last sentence of the 17th verse of the 18th chapter of the Acts. Happily the question did not arise, the greatest harmony existing during the earlier stages of the war under the gentle if firm rule of the Principal Chaplain, the Very Rev. Dr. J. M. Simms,* assisted by the Rev. Fr. Keatinge,† the Rev. Fr. Rawlinson, and a Church of England chaplain. This clerical committee administered to the spiritual needs of the Army in a manner which, so far as I was able to see, left nothing to be desired, the main feature being a broad-minded tolerance exempt from all those petty distinctions which, however prominent among different creeds in days of peace, are out of place in time of war. As the Army increased, an agitation was started in England against the spiritual needs of those soldiers who were members of the Church of England being supervised by a chaplain of another persuasion, and eventually in 1915 Bishop Gwynne‡ was appointed Deputy Chaplain-General for the Church of England troops, Dr. Simms exercising control over denominations outside the Church of England, except the Roman Catholics, whose needs were

* The Very Rev. John M. Simms, D.D., C.B., C.M.G., M.P. for Co. Down. Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

† The Rt. Rev. Bishop William Keatinge, C.B.E., C.M.G. Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain to the Forces, 1920.

‡ The Rt. Rev. Llewelyn Henry Gwynne, D.D., C.M.G., C.B.E. Bishop of Khartoum (1918-1920). Bishop of Egypt and the Sudan since 1920.

attended to by Father Keatinge. No doubt the change was for the benefit of the troops, but from the questions that flowed into the A.G.'s office there seemed to be more points of dispute than under the original regime. The number of chaplains attached to units was considerably increased during the war from the establishments originally laid down, the first augmentation being in the spring of 1915, and a larger one a year later, when in my opinion the numbers were excessive. These increases were invariably due to representations by Church of England laymen at home who seemed oblivious of the fact that once increases were authorized for one denomination all other religions represented in the Army would lay claim to similar concessions. That the chaplain in the field is a great asset, when he is the right stamp of man, is universally acknowledged, but during the war there was an inclination in certain circles to press for numbers out of proportion to the needs of the troops.

As 1915 drew to its close I was greeted one day with the sad news that my late A.D.C., Captain Valentine Davis, had been killed by a shell when returning from an observation post. He had been with me in Ulster, and we came together over to France, where he served me well till he left at his own request to join a battery at the front in September, 1915. He was a cheery youth, much travelled, and always on the look-out to do anything for my comfort. After Davis had left me I took a boy from my old regiment, Jack Watson, who stayed with me till I left France. He managed to pick up an attack of jaundice shortly after coming to G.H.Q., and the nickname of "the Yellow Peril" which someone in the mess gave him stuck to him while he was with us. Shortly after I returned to England he, too, met a soldier's death while serving with the Gordons in front of Ypres.

The sacrifice of such young lives is the worst tragedy of war.

CHAPTER IX.

THE month of December, 1915, saw great changes at General Headquarters in France. Sir William Robertson handed over his post as Chief of the General Staff of the Expeditionary Force to Major-General Sir L. Kiggell,* on appointment as Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the War Office, and on 19th December, Sir Douglas Haig† assumed command of the British forces in succession to Lord French.

For some weeks previously rumours had been rife that a change of command was in contemplation, but the why and wherefore were enigmas to the Army far removed from the intrigues which were taking place in London. Someday, perhaps, the full story of these intrigues may see the light, but be that as it may, no man ever held the affection and confidence of the troops to a greater extent than the Chief who led us through the first seventeen months of the greatest war in which our country has been engaged, and who, above all, by his undaunted spirit had rallied his "Old Contemptibles" after a retreat in the face of overwhelming numbers such as few armies could have survived, to lead them forward to victory on the Marne.

If in the minds of those who swayed the destiny of our country early and striking results were expected from the change in command, the long-drawn-out years of the war that ensued must have been disappointing.

At the end of January, 1916, a storm in a teacup occurred at

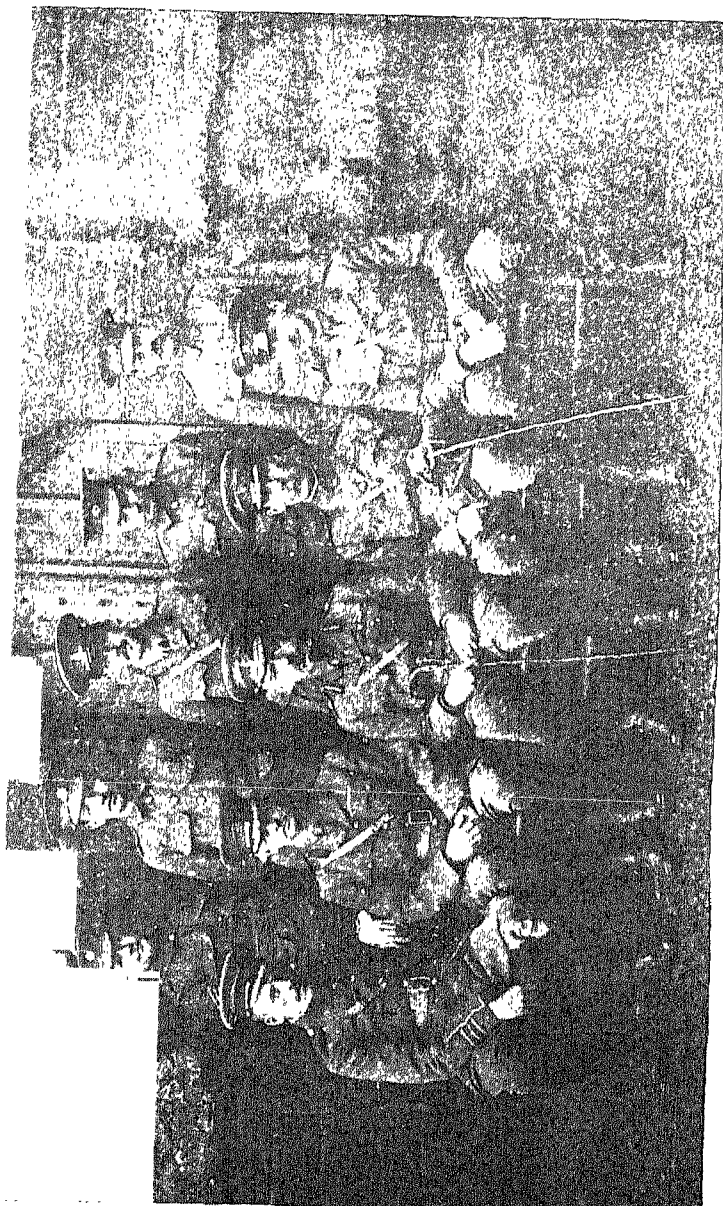
* Lieut.-General Sir Launcelot E. Kiggell, K.C.B., K.C.M.G. Lieutenant-Governor of Guernsey, 1918-1920.

† Field-Marshal Earl Haig, K.T., G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O. Commander-in-Chief, B.E.F., 1915-1919.

G.H.Q. owing to the arrest of a Cabinet Minister, to which I should not allude were it not that Colonel à C. Repington, in his book "The First World War," thought fit to publish a highly coloured version of the incident. On his attention being drawn to it, he acknowledged to me that while it might be exaggerated it would in his opinion amuse the public. The facts are as follows :—

During the year 1915 it had been found necessary to issue and enforce stringent orders in regard to persons unconnected with the Army in France wandering about the war zone without permission, a practice which had begun to assume dangerous proportions. A system of permit cards was instituted, and no difficulty was ever raised to any reasonable application for a visit, even if, as was often the case, of a private character. The authorities at home concurred in the arrangement, to which wide publicity was given. Late in January, 1916, some Cabinet Ministers attended a conference in Paris, and applications came through for passes for certain of them to visit St. Omer from Boulogne. On the morning of the 30th January information was received that Sir F. E. Smith,* the Attorney-General, a member of the Cabinet, intended to come through to visit Lieutenant-Colonel Winston Churchill, then commanding a battalion in the 2nd Corps in the trenches near Ploegstreet Wood. No pass had been applied for by the gentleman, and therefore the Provost-Marshal automatically warned all road posts to look out for an individual without a pass. Whether the information reached the Provost-Marshal too late, or whether one of the posts neglected their duty is not known, but it was discovered that Sir F. E. Smith, who was dressed in uniform, obtained a car without authority from the Mechanical Transport Depot at St. Omer, and went on to the 2nd Corps. When

* The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Birkenhead, P.C. Attorney-General, 1915-1919. Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, 1919-1922.



ADJUTANT-GENERAL AND STAFF

France, 1914

Captain V. Davis, A.D.C.

Major Childs, Colonel Cavendish, Adjutant-General, Colonel Bunbury, Major Cooke

this was known late in the afternoon word was sent by telephone to the 2nd Army to arrange for his return to G.H.Q. At 10 p.m. Sir Frederick was discovered in Lieutenant-Colonel Winston Churchill's dugout, and conducted to G.H.Q. by the Assistant Provost-Marshal of the 2nd Corps, not arriving however until 4 a.m., owing to an unfortunate breakdown of the car. An officer of the Provost branch at G.H.Q. who had arranged accommodation for Sir Frederick at the local inn was waiting for his arrival, and at the inn asked for his assurance that he would not disturb the Commander-in-Chief, or the Cabinet Ministers then in St. Omer, until he had seen the Adjutant-General in the morning. There was some little difficulty over this, which however was overcome, and at 9 a.m. the next morning I saw Sir Frederick. He was annoyed, perhaps naturally, that he had been technically "arrested," a step that was not intended, the original order from G.H.Q. being that he should be escorted back to G.H.Q. It was, I think, the fear of ridicule more than anything else that disturbed the equilibrium of the Attorney-General, but, as I pointed out to him, the Commander-in-Chief's order in regard to passes had evidently not been unwittingly evaded, because the other members of his party had arranged for the necessary permits, and further, in view of the fact that he himself had been on the Staff of the Indian Corps earlier in the war, it was a matter of greater surprise that he should have placed himself in such a position. In addition, I explained that had an application been made for him to visit Lieutenant-Colonel Winston Churchill, I should have been glad to arrange it with the 2nd Army.

Colonel Repington's statement that Sir Frederick had called on me before going out to the front is not a fact, while the so-called "apology" mentioned by him was merely an explanation that the actual "arrest" had been the result of a telephonic error, and was written by the direction of the Commander-in-Chief, at the

suggestion, I gathered, of Mr. Bonar Law, who, as ever, was ready to pour oil on troubled waters.

Personally I was sorry the incident should have occurred to anyone in a public position, but none the less it was a satisfaction to know that throughout the Army orders would be enforced without regard to persons or position, and I hope this may continue to be the case in our Army in future wars.

In the years to come, when I was often in touch with Sir Frederick Smith, I never perceived the least trace of any remembrance of the incident, and with regret read its resurrection in Colonel Repington's book in a garbled and imaginative form, which might lead to an impression that obedience to orders issued by a Commander-in-Chief in the field was dependent on the status of an individual.

On the afternoon of the day of this interview Lieut.-Colonel Winston Churchill came in to see me, and in the course of a friendly chat expressed the hope that in dealing with the case I had not been influenced by the remembrance that at one time Sir Frederick Smith had galloped for Sir Edward Carson. I assured him that the idea had never entered my mind, Ulster and its affairs having long ago been washed off the tablets of my brain. The suggestion struck me as indicating that Winston had not altogether lost the politician's way of looking at things when he reassumed his uniform.

On 10th February Lord Kitchener and Sir William Robertson came to G.H.Q., and on the 12th Sir Douglas Haig told me that Lord Kitchener wished me to take up the post of Adjutant-General at the War Office.

It was a bit of a wrench saying good-bye to my Staff, several of whom had been with me since we landed at Havre in August, 1914, who, one and all, had served me with a cheery loyalty that made the A.G.'s branch at G.H.Q. a veritable happy family. The prospect, too, of changing the optimistic atmosphere of

G.H.Q. for the gloom I had noticed during a couple of week-end visits to Whitehall was not enticing, especially as I gathered from Robertson that the War Office machine was running far from smoothly, indications of which had not been altogether unobserved at G.H.Q. It was, however, a consolation to feel that in Robertson and Jack Cowans,* two colleagues on the Army Council, I should find old friends with whom I had worked happily in the past. On 20th February I crossed over to London and took over the duties of Adjutant-General from Lieut.-General Sir Henry Slater on the following day.

On taking up as Adjutant-General at the War Office the control of a department in which I had already served some six-and-a-half years, and with which I was well acquainted in all its branches, I did not expect to find the smoothly running machine I had left in August, 1914. The enormous inflation of numbers necessitated by the war would of itself justify dislocation in the most perfect machine, and when to this was added internecine strife with almost every Government department, each one holding the opinion that their particular interests were the most vital towards winning the war, it is hardly surprising that the War Office was showing signs of wear and tear. Another factor was that when previous to 1914 the mobilization arrangements were perfected on the assumption that the Expeditionary Force would not exceed six Divisions and a Division of cavalry, many officers serving in permanent appointments at the War Office were selected for the Staff of the Expeditionary Force. As one of them, I naturally, from a personal standpoint, was at the time glad that it was so, but from the point of view of the efficiency of the Army and of the good of the country the system proved fatal.

From the experience then gained it is to be hoped that the personnel of the War Office will be left intact if in the future the

* General Sir John Cowans, G.C.B., G.C.M.G. (1862-1921). Director-General, Territorial Forces, 1910-12; Quartermaster-General to the Forces, 1912-19.

country becomes engaged in a war of any magnitude, an opinion which I fancy is held by most soldiers who held responsible appointments in the field and at home during the war. I do not suggest that those who were brought in to fill the places of the men who had gone to the front were less capable of carrying out the duties for which they were responsible, but work in the War Office is a very different experience to that in a command, and time is necessary to digest and understand the methods of the various departments, quite apart from any technical knowledge a soldier may possess. I know that when I was first employed in the Adjutant-General's department in a subordinate capacity it took me some six months before I felt thoroughly at home in the working of the machine. Many of the officers who were brought in after mobilization, having had no previous experience of the office, found themselves suddenly plunged into a vortex of work, urgent and overwhelming, ignorant of the conditions under which that work had to be carried on, and without knowledge of important decisions of the past, which form the precedents on which our Army is built up. What wonder, then, if the great driving-wheel of the national war machine did not at times run smoothly?

And what of the great Field-Marshal who was responsible for and directed the activities of the War Office at this time? I had never served directly under Lord Kitchener, and had only met him personally on two occasions during the South African War, so when I came to the War Office it was with a perfectly open mind, and with the determination to do all in my power to assist in the gigantic task in which our Army was engaged. Rumours had floated over to France that Lord Kitchener was at times difficult, and somewhat insistent on his own methods, which did not always fit in with the carefully thought-out system for the allocation of work on which the War Office edifice had been built up, while occasionally he blazed out at some unfortunate indivi-

dual who had incurred his displeasure. These rumours did not trouble me, for in the course of my career I had thoroughly digested the fact that all men have their foibles, and that it is essential in official life to avoid friction by studying the humours of those set in authority over us.

On the morning of the day on which I took over my appointment, 21st February, 1916, Lord Kitchener sent for me and talked for about an hour. That hour gave me food for thought. I was prepared for emphatic directions on the line to be pursued, especially in regard to man-power, the burning question of the moment, and for, at all events, some indication of the strong, reserved man who had captured the confidence of the public. Instead of which Lord Kitchener rambled rather than talked, mainly about his own position and powers which, he maintained, had been curtailed by the increased powers of Sir William Robertson, when a couple of months before the latter had assumed the appointment of Chief of the General Staff. He touched on the difficulties he encountered with his colleagues in the Cabinet, difficulties I well understood before many weeks had passed, and wound up by a platitude that every possible man must be got into the Army. I listened, not without some astonishment; for the bearing and attitude of the man who had helped to create order out of chaos in Egypt struck me as sad, almost pathetic. I told him I would take a few weeks to look round and then put up proposals to meet the man-power situation.

During the three-and-a-half months I served under Lord Kitchener nothing could have been more kind or considerate than his attitude, but at Cabinet meetings and conferences, when supporting the claims of the Army against sharp-witted politicians, he was out of his depth, and indeed, from remarks he let drop from time to time, it was evident that he felt himself at a disadvantage when it came to wrangling across a council table.

Unfortunately, from early in 1916 until Sir Auckland Geddes was appointed Minister of National Service in August, 1917, hardly a day passed without a wrangle in some form or another respecting the claims of various Government departments for men. During the month of March, 1916, I submitted a memorandum to Lord Kitchener, making various suggestions to ameliorate the situation, and, above all, urging the formation of one central authority, who alone should be responsible for the distribution of the national man-power. He gave me to understand that it would be put before the Cabinet, but I found some days later that this had not been done, so called in the help of Sir William Robertson, by whom it was brought up for discussion. No action was taken on it at the time ; indeed I was told chaffingly by one of the elder statesmen, Lord Lansdowne, that my ideas were Utopian. Would that we had then entered into the Utopia, the gates of which were not to open until August, 1917, when the Ministry of National Service was created ; much friction, discontent, labour unrest and loss of energy would have been saved, while the manhood and womanhood of the nation would have been directed systematically and methodically into channels in which each individual would have pulled his or her greatest weight.

The chaos created by the delay to appoint one authority to control the man-power energies of the country militated against an early effect when the Ministry was eventually formed under Sir Auckland Geddes, magnificent though that work was once it came into being.

During the short time I served under Lord Kitchener in the War Office I formed the opinion that a soldier who has made his profession his life's work can never shine as a politician. The methods and outlook of the two professions are too dissimilar.

One of the first steps taken to put my department on a sound footing was to secure from France the services of Colonel Childs

as head of the discipline branch, and of Major Auckland Geddes, as he was then, as Director of Recruiting, together with several junior officers who had the experience both in the field and in the War Office. That done, it was possible to attend the committees and conferences which throughout the war were in operation daily, and often hourly, without fear of the work of the department getting in arrear.

The amount of the time of higher officials taken up at conferences was appalling. No one would have objected if results had been obtained, but more often than not hours were wasted listening to interminable talk without any conclusion being arrived at. I often wondered if the French or Germans carried on the conduct of the war in a similar Tower of Babel, an apt simile, for in truth one was often in doubt as to what the speakers meant, if indeed they always knew themselves!

At the end of March, 1916, serious labour troubles broke out in Glasgow, which had no sooner quieted down than the Irish rebellion burst upon the country, and General Sir John Maxwell, with a specially selected Staff including Colonel Hutchison* and Colonel Byrne,† was hurried over to Dublin, reinforcements of troops being pushed across without delay. The history of the fanatical attempt to overthrow British rule in Ireland when the Empire was fighting for its very life is well known, and added yet another anxiety to the heavy responsibilities of the Army Council.

At the Royal Commission which was held to inquire into the outbreak, Mr. Birrell hinted that application had been made to the War Office for extra troops to overawe Sinn Fein. This was not a fact. During the month of March, 1916, General Friend,‡

* Major-General Sir Robert Hutchison, K.C.M.G., C.B. M.P. for Kirkcaldy, 1922-1924.

† Brigadier-General Sir Joseph A. Byrne, K.B.E., C.B. Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Seychelles, since 1922. Inspector-General, Royal Irish Constabulary, 1916-1920.

‡ Major-General the Rt. Hon. Sir L. B. Friend, P.C. (Ireland), K.B.E., C.B. Commanding in Ireland, 1914-1916.

commanding the troops in Ireland, had intimated that there might be trouble in the South of Ireland, and if so he would require extra troops. Arrangements were therefore made to hold reinforcements in readiness against the event, but nothing more was heard of it. On the 20th March, 1916, the Lord-Lieutenant,* Mr. Birrell, Mr. Redmond and others had an interview with Lord Kitchener on the subject of recruiting in Ireland, and it was suggested among other proposals that troops should be sent from England to various localities in Ireland for the sole purpose of encouraging recruiting. It was not considered, however, by Lord Kitchener that the presence of troops would have an effect on recruiting commensurate with the delay that would take place in training, and with the unpopularity of the move.

No question whatever arose of sending troops for the purpose of overawing Sinn Fein, or of anticipating rebellion. Had there at the time been any fear of an outbreak surely Mr. Redmond would have had cognizance of it. The suggestion before the Royal Commission was merely an attempt on Mr. Birrell's part to evade his responsibility, and even had troops been sent under the conditions suggested, they would have had no influence on the outbreak in Dublin, the history of which is now fully known.

Incidentally, on the 8th April, 1916, owing to a report from Lord French, then Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces, I wrote to Sir M. Nathan,† the Under-Secretary, informing him that according to information received certain parts of Ireland were in a very disturbed state, insurrection being openly hinted at in the public press. I suggested for the consideration of the authorities in Ireland that in the event of an emergency the power of the military authorities to try persons by courts-martial for infringement of the Defence of the Realm Regulations could be

* Viscount Wimborne. Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1915-1918.

† Lieut.-Colonel the Rt. Hon. Sir Mathew Nathan, P.C. (Ireland), G.C.M.G. Under-Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1914-1916. Governor of Queensland since 1920.

restored by Royal Proclamation. No action was taken by the Irish authorities at the time, nor was any demand made for troops. What could be expected of a Chief Secretary who treated reports made to him by his Intelligence officers on the activities of the Irish Volunteers as "rubbish," who allowed without interference a practice attack on the Castle, the seat of Government in Ireland,* and who was the apostle of a policy whereby "it was safer and more expedient to leave the law in abeyance if collision with any section of the Irish people can be avoided"?

It was only by the merest fluke, and the cowardice of the rebels, that Dublin Castle did not fall into their hands on that fateful Easter Monday. A party of rebels had actually gained the outer yard, and were only prevented from becoming masters of the whole place by half a dozen men, under a police officer, who held the inner gateway, and fired from the windows above.

The rebellion having been quelled by the energy and determination of Sir John Maxwell, the Government were again in the throes of a bad attack of nerves, owing to the steps which were being taken to mete out punishment to the rebels; rebels, let it be remembered, not only against their own country, but against all the Allies who were fighting to free Europe from Prussian domination. I was several times sent for by Mr. Asquith, the burden of whose complaint was the long-drawn-out tale of daily executions. I agreed, with wisdom learnt after the event, that it would have been better to have tried all the most conspicuous rebels at one time before several courts-martial—if, indeed, any form of trial other than a "drumhead" court-martial was necessary for those taken in arms—executing those condemned to death in one batch. It must, however be borne in mind that from the moment the rebellion was crushed the question of punishment was a political and not a military question, and if the Cabinet had decided on a policy to counteract the feeble parody of govern-

* Report of Inquiry by the Royal Commission, 1916.

ment that had existed in Ireland for the past nine years, it was for them to inform and instruct the soldier who had saved the situation for them.

Two courses were open—ruthless repression carried to a logical conclusion, or conciliation embracing the relinquishment of the death penalty, coupled with the instant application of the Military Service Act to Ireland. Had the latter course been taken without hesitation, it would, so I have since been told by many Irishmen, have proved successful from a recruiting point of view, and have been accepted by the country at large. The policy of compromise actually pursued by Mr. Asquith changed the atmosphere of contempt which in the eyes of their countrymen hung over the beaten rebels into a blaze of patriotic glory, and sowed the seeds of assassination, rebellion and internecine strife which were fated to harass the island for the next six years.

Before long military affairs in Ireland had again settled into more or less normal channels, although now and again disquieting rumours and reports brought that land of unrest into prominence. These culminated in November, 1917, in a scare that rebellion was again about to break out. Colonel Hutchison, who had been with Sir John Maxwell, was again sent over in order to assist Sir Bryan Mahon,* and orders were issued for all the Irish Reserve battalions to be at once brought over from Ireland to England on account of an epidemic of rifle-stealing, which was assuming alarming proportions, and in order to remove the men of these battalions from temptation. The move was effected with the utmost despatch once the decision was taken, for fear that the Government would temporize under pressure of the Irish members in the House of Commons, a not improbable contingency.

Serious as was the state of Ireland, and distracting as were its sporadic outbreaks, they were as nothing compared to the main

* General the Rt. Hon. Sir Bryan Mahon, P.C. (Ireland), K.C.B., K.C.V.O. Commander-in-Chief, the Forces in Ireland, 1916-1918.

object on which the War Office was engaged, that of getting on with the war.

When I returned to the War Office in February, 1916, the C.I.G.S. had emphasized that the main work of my department must be the getting of men. An inspection of the numbers due to come forward, and a very early experience of the claims on manpower, not only for the Army but by every Government department, indicated that troublous times were ahead. In the long fight that went on practically daily from this time until the Ministry of National Service was formed in August, 1917, I had the constant and unfailing support of Sir William Robertson ; indeed, but for his stubborn driving insistence at War Committees and Cabinet meetings even the results which were achieved would not have been attained.

These wrangles round Cabinet and conference tables had their amusing side. It was pleasant to watch and study the various methods employed by the different claimants, all preaching on the one text that their particular contribution to the war was the one and only thing that mattered. More pleasant still was it to trip a claimant up in his argument by demonstrating that his figures were entirely fictitious. Then, of course, it was always necessary to be on guard against the well-worn cry of the politician that casualties were too heavy, and that too many men were employed in non-fighting services.

In those days Mr. Lloyd George was deeply in love with France and would expatiate on the small numbers employed in the French rearward zones, forgetful of the facts that the French were fighting in their own country, that their women worked in a way our women only learnt to imitate when the war had run a long course, and, above all, that in spite of our efforts we never succeeded in being allowed to check the state of the French manpower in order to verify the statements made to our Ministers, although the French were allowed access to our figures.

Occasionally some heat was displayed over these "pull devil, pull baker" argumentative discussions, and I was glad when it was so, for as a rule if an adversary will only lose his temper one generally gains one's objective.

The representatives of labour who were called in to advise the Government gave me the impression that they were actuated not so much by their honest opinion as to where men would pull the greatest weight for the country as by their anxiety to stand well with the trades they represented, the time having arrived when volunteering for the trenches had ceased to be popular. In the mines, in particular, the hours were short, and many men who had never seen a mine escaped military service by becoming miners, while at one period, after many thousand miners had been released from the Army and sent back to the mines, the output of coal was actually less than before this reinforcement to labour.

One example may be quoted to indicate what was practically the defiance of Government instructions by various departments of the State. On the 29th March, 1917, instructions were given by the War Cabinet for the release of 215,000 men from various trades and occupations. On 25th May following *one* man of the 215,000 had been posted to the Army. It is small wonder if those responsible for the upkeep of the Army, and those responsible for military operations in the field, questioned the capacity of the Government to win the war. Someday, perhaps, the full history of the methods employed to raise and distribute the man-power of the country during the late war may be written. Interesting it would be, if only to illustrate the shifts to which a country unprepared for war is put when the tocsin sounds, and the paralysing effects produced when those responsible for the safety and government of a nation fail to take a bold, consistent line from the outset.

During the early days of August, 1914, various Army orders*

* Information on the recruiting methods will be found in the General Annual Reports issued on the authority of the Army Council.

were issued authorizing the enlistment of men of special trades, of ex-soldiers, and of ordinary civilians for a period of years or for the duration of the war. On 8th August, 1914, the first appeal for 100,000 men to form the nucleus of the New or Kitchener's Army, as it was called, was promulgated, which resulted in a rush of men that for a time swamped the existing recruiting machinery. The decision to create a New Army instead of taking advantage of the existing decentralized organization of the Territorial Force, which was capable of indefinite expansion, was, in the opinion of many experienced officers, a mistake, an opinion that was later justified by the difficulties in organization and administration, which increased as the war progressed. A certain feeling of soreness, too, was manifest among the Territorials, who felt that they were being overshadowed by the New Armies. The only argument which I ever heard put forward for the creation of this new organization was that the glamour of Lord Kitchener's name would attract recruits, an argument which, if valid, would seem to be a reproach to the sense of patriotism of the manhood of the country. Personally I am convinced that had the call gone forth to join the Territorial Force the numbers obtained would have been equally large.

In September, 1914, owing to the difficulties of coping with the large numbers presenting themselves for enlistment, and of training those enlisted, the physical standard was raised, the immediate effect of which was to check the flow of recruits. From this time onwards to the end of the war measures of various kinds were necessary first to encourage, and later to impel, the flow of men required to maintain the forces in the field.

At first a campaign of propaganda under a Parliamentary Recruiting Committee was instituted throughout the length and breadth of the land, one result of which was the raising of special, or class, units by municipalities and individuals. Admirable as was the intention, and valuable as were the services performed by

these local units while they remained in existence, the principle was at fault. As time went on reserves were not forthcoming from the sources from which they were raised, and much heart-burning occurred when the units either disappeared or were merged into other formations. The policy should have been to raise a mass of men with no limitation for service lower than that of the county to which they belonged.

As the war progressed even the county distinction was obliged in some cases to make way for that of nationality, but in those early days it was perhaps impossible to foresee the measure of fluidity that would be forced upon the Army in order to meet the requirements of the war in its later stages. In June, 1915, the age standard for recruits was raised to 40 years, and during the following month the National Registration Act enabled the Government to determine the occupations of all men of military age.

In spite of the drop in the numbers of recruits—in September, 1915, the lowest total since the war began was reached—the Government still adhered to the voluntary system. The group system, inaugurated in October, 1915, by Lord Derby,* then Director-General of Recruiting, caused a rise in the recruiting barometer for a couple of months, and though under it nearly two-and-a-quarter million men were attested, a small proportion only of those men actually joined the Army, mainly for the reason that they were in occupations from which it was considered their services could not be spared.

In 1916 the first measure of compulsion was passed in the shape of the Military Service Act, but so honeycombed with loopholes for evasion that it was not far removed from the voluntary system, local tribunals being set up throughout the country to which men, or their employers, could appeal for temporary, or

* The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C.B. Under-Secretary for War, 1916. Secretary of State for War, 1916-1918.

what became practically permanent, exemption. It was about this period that I assumed responsibility for the War Office recruiting machine. During the month of April, 1916, Major Auckland Geddes joined my Staff at the War Office from France, and on 7th May took up the duties of Director of Recruiting.

To attempt to describe the abilities of the man whose services I had been fortunate enough to secure would be an impertinence. His record, whether as a scientist, soldier, Cabinet Minister or Ambassador, speaks for itself. But this I can say, that never in my experience did I find a man with such a grip of the work that came under his hand, or with such a knack of extracting the best out of those who served him. For myself, from the moment he took charge of the recruiting machine and gradually worked it up from small beginnings into the great department which eventually became the Ministry of National Service, I never had a moment's anxiety as to the accuracy of the facts to be placed before the Army Council and the Cabinet in so far as the supply of men for the Army was concerned.

It may not be uninteresting to touch briefly here and there on the struggle for men during the time I was responsible to the Army Council for their provision. The two main arguments in the mouths of our political masters, especially of Mr. Lloyd George until he became Secretary of State for War and saw further into Army matters, were the numbers of fit men not employed in actual fighting, and the amount of casualties requiring replacement which had to be forecast. In regard to this latter point careful comparisons enabled the statistical branch to arrive at conclusions which in the end proved to be very fairly accurate, but it was difficult to get the civil mind to grasp the fact that casualties in war are mainly dependent on enemy action, which may upset the most careful calculations.

In the early days of the war numbers of men physically fit for the front were undoubtedly employed in the non-fighting services,

but from 1915 onwards the forces both in the field and at home were combed and recombined to a state which at length bordered on the danger line. To give but one example, a cry was raised that all male personnel belonging to medical units should be found from men not wholly physically fit. Substitution by unfit men, and by women, had already been made throughout the medical services, except in regard to men employed as stretcher-bearers of the units at the front. It took a great deal of talking to convince people who had never seen wounded men carried under fire, that to employ any but strong and lusty bearers for the work would be a danger to, and increase the suffering of, the wounded.

To the end of the war there were in the back areas a proportion of fit men, but these were skilled artificers, and as such were pulling far greater weight than if they had been handling a rifle in the trenches. In the early days of the war thousands of skilled men whose services would have been invaluable perished at the front for lack of a system whereby each man should have been allocated to work in which he would pull the greatest weight, a maxim that should be the Alpha and Omega of a nation's effort in war.

During the first days of June, 1916, I attended a meeting at the House of Commons where Lord Kitchener and Sir William Robertson addressed some two hundred members of Parliament on the subject of recruiting. From the questions asked, and the remarks let fall, it was evident that the audience were ignorant of the A B C of that Army organization which was none the less so often criticized in the House.

On the following day—3rd June—Mr. Asquith took over the duties of Secretary of State for War from Lord Kitchener. On the morning of the 6th Robertson came into my room with a look on his face which told me that something was wrong, and broke the news of the loss of the "Hampshire" with Lord Kitchener and his Staff. From remarks let drop here and there I had

doubted if Lord Kitchener would ever return to the War Office, and now that the end had come I was deeply grieved that the great kindly soldier, as I had found him, would never return to fill perhaps some high office more congenial to him than the one he had just left.

During the month that Mr. Asquith remained at the War Office, which was just after the passing of the Military Service Act, the question of conscientious objectors came up. I confess that I had no sympathy with the state of mind of a man who for any reason, religious or otherwise, refuses to bear his part in the defence of his country. Neither in France or Germany, nor I believe in America later on, were such exemptions tolerated, and now that the terrible strain of modern war had become known it was not difficult to imagine the lengths to which conscientious objection might lead.

At several interviews with Mr. Asquith I pressed that if conscientious objection was to be admitted at all it should be on religious grounds only. This would have been comparatively easy to verify by tracing a man's career from his youth upwards, and would thus have eliminated the men who suddenly found salvation under the terror of exposure to danger. Mr. Asquith, however, thought differently, and decided that objection to military service, whether on religious or other grounds, must be accepted, although such persons, other than ministers of a church or recognized religious sect who were totally exempt, could be employed on labour and on certain medical services.

This decision entailed the working out of schemes to meet the complicated situation thus created, and led to the formation of "The Non-Combatant Corps," a corps made up of men who, refusing to fight, were sent by the civil recruiting tribunals to perform military labour. A favourite method of avoiding service by men who had been called up under the Military Service Act, and were enrolled in the ranks of the Army, was to refuse to obey

any command given them by officers or non-commissioned officers. Such men were tried by court-martial, sent to a civil prison, and from thence placed at the disposal of a civilian committee appointed by the Government to find them useful national work. The Non-Combatant Corps did good work, and many men in it from time to time volunteered for the fighting services, owing, I fancy, a good deal to the ridicule to which they were exposed from the rank and file of the Army. At times they gave trouble, as the following extract from a letter I wrote to the Deputy Adjutant-General in Mesopotamia illustrates :—

6th December, 1916.

You may have heard of a thing called “ The Non-Combatant Corps,” consisting of gentlemen who refuse to fight, and are sent by tribunals to the Corps to do any work to which they may be put. We had some 500 or 600 working at Newhaven, when they got hold of the idea—started, I believe, by some Socialists—that if they loaded up shells it would be the thin end of the wedge on the part of the Government to force them into the fighting ranks. Of course, the whole thing is a myth, and it is their duty to do whatever labour they may be put to, provided they are not placed in a position where they might be called upon to use arms in self-defence. About 100 of them struck work, and I have given orders for the whole lot to be sent out to you for labour. They are, of course, not trained, except for marching, and are simply a labour corps, with the proviso that they cannot be employed in any place where the enemy might get at them, aeroplanes always excepted. I hope by the time they get to you they will have seen the error of their ways, and do their bit fully for the country. As a matter of fact, some of them are not bad fellows, the worst being Socialistic peacemakers.

The worst case I came across was that of an officer who after serving for fifteen months at the front, and having been selected to be a machine-gun officer in France, suddenly, to use his own words, “ found Christ in the trenches,” and objected to run any more danger. He was packed off to India, and, I hope, learnt that Christianity and active patriotism are not necessarily antagonistic.

In dealing with this conscientious objection business, the one sect with which I had full sympathy was that of the Quakers. Their creed was old-established, consistent, and unaffected by the war. Thanks to the activities of Sir George Newman,* arrangements were made to enrol in the Friends' Ambulance Unit, which was doing good work at the front, all Quakers who were called up, care at the same time being taken that converts who joined the persuasion during the war were eliminated.

The whole question of conscientious objectors on the lines laid down by the Prime Minister was complicated, irritating, involved much unnecessary work at a time when pressure was heaviest, and created much discontent, both in the Army and among the conscientious objectors themselves. If exemption was necessary, owing to political or ecclesiastical pressure, a clear-cut line exempting only ministers of religion would in the long run have received greater support from the public than the nebulous and unsatisfactory compromise which was adopted.

On 8th July, 1916, Mr. Lloyd George took over the control of the War Office as Secretary of State with Lord Derby as Under-Secretary, and a couple of weeks later some merriment was caused at an Army Council meeting when the subject of the employment of Chinese labour to relieve white labour at the front arose. The question had been under consideration for some time, and all those round the table, remembering the hue and cry led by our Secretary of State against Chinese labour in the mines of South Africa in the past, expected that he would find it difficult to box his political compass. Not a bit of it! After some argument and explanations on the absolute necessity of obtaining a further supply of labour if British industries were to be maintained, Mr. Lloyd George with a whimsical smile agreed to the experiment, and joined heartily in the laugh that burst out round the table.

* Sir George Newman, Kt., K.C.B., F.R.C.P., Chief Medical Officer to Universities Branch, Board of Trade, 1907-1919.

However much at times one may have differed in opinion from the methods employed by Mr. Lloyd George in matters military, I always felt that he was genuinely out to win the war, allowing nothing to stand in his way. His attitude on this occasion coincided with the rather apt description of his methods given by an Irish writer* : " It is impossible to know him (Mr. Lloyd George) without counting upon his readiness with a new set of opinions whenever the old set proved unworkable."

It was at this meeting, too, that we were able to convert him to the fact that there were many men employed in munition factories who could be spared for the Army without jeopardizing the output of material, an argument to which he invariably turned a deaf ear when he controlled the Ministry of Munitions. Of all the Secretaries of State under whom I have served none could put up a better or more effective fight at the Cabinet for principles which he had convinced himself were to the advantage of the office for which he was responsible.

It was just about this time that Colonel J. Byrne,† who had returned from Ireland after the rebellion of Easter Week, 1916, to his chair in the legal branch of my department, came into my room one day to tell me that he had been offered the Inspector-Generalship of the Royal Irish Constabulary in succession to Sir Neville Chamberlain,‡ and to ask my advice on the matter. I unhesitatingly advised him to refuse it. Byrne, in his own line, was one of the best officers in the War Office, and I had the intention of sending him to France when opportunity offered, a policy I endeavoured to carry out with all officers of my branch who had been tied for a long time to their chairs. His prospects of rising high in the Army were good, and I was afraid he might be thrown

* " The Irish Revolution," by William O'Brien. George Allen and Unwin, Limited.

† See page 239.

‡ Colonel Sir Neville Chamberlain, K.C.B., K.V.C.O. Inspector-General Royal Irish Constabulary, 1900-1916.

to the political wolves at some time or another in Ireland. He seemed, however, bent upon taking the appointment on the grounds that he was Irish, a Catholic, liked the country, and that the post seemed to offer permanent employment. I was very sorry to lose him, and urged him not to close with the offer until he had in his hand a note signed by the Prime Minister himself ensuring a full pension in the event of the Home Rule Bill of 1914 coming into operation, and his appointment consequently lapsing. I believe he secured this promise, but unfortunately it was not applicable to the circumstances under which he vacated the appointment in 1920.

During July, 1916, the responsibility for the administration of the Mesopotamian campaign was handed over by the Indian Government to the War Office, which entailed considerable extra work on the Quartermaster-General's and Adjutant-General's departments, and the despatch to that country of selected Staff officers on whom reliance could be placed.

In the meantime the question of man-power was boiling up again, and the prospects of reinforcements for the future were causing the military members of the Army Council grave anxiety.

During the month of May, 1916, I had submitted a scheme for a man-power Distribution Board which was circulated to the Cabinet, and discussed by the War Committee in the September following, when a decision was reached that the Board should get to work at once. Three reports, the last dated 9th November, 1916, were handed in by the Board, but nothing effective developed from its activities. At the end of November, 1916, the military members of the Army Council drew up a very strong memorandum on the state of the Army, and definitely urged a scheme of compulsory national service to save the situation. Mr. Lloyd George decided that this representation should go forward as from the military members only, the Parliamentary members of the Army Council holding themselves free to press its

adoption on the Cabinet. Two days later the memorandum came before the Cabinet, and as usual a Committee was appointed to examine it. Five days later, on 5th December, Mr. Asquith resigned. What influence the persistent pressure of the soldiers on the Government for men may have had on the political crisis I do not know, but I have always thought that Mr. Lloyd George found the memorandum of the military members a not unuseful weapon to fight his way into a position where, to use his own words, "he could get on with the war."

The new Government, with Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister and Lord Derby as Secretary of State for War (a very popular appointment at the War Office), started off with the best intentions as regards man-power, and on 21st December created the National Service Department. Unfortunately, instead of the new department taking over existing machinery from other Government departments, including the Recruiting Directorate at the War Office, and becoming the arbiter of contending claims, as had been suggested and urged by the Army Council, it developed into yet another department drawing on the pool of civil labour, increasing industrial unrest, and complicating a situation already difficult. These results, of course, only developed as time went on.

The creation of the department having been decided on, Government were in some doubt as to the selection of a suitable man to fill the office of Director-General of National Service. Mr. Montagu* was approached, but declined on the score of health. Eventually the post was offered to Mr. Neville Chamberlain,† who accepted it. That Mr. Neville Chamberlain entirely failed in the venture was not altogether his fault. The whole scheme of man-power was involved and complicated in the

* The Rt. Hon. Edwin Samuel Montagu, P.C. Minister of Munitions, 1916. Secretary of State for India, 1917-1922.

† The Rt. Hon. Arthur Neville Chamberlain, P.C. M.P., Ladywood Division of Birmingham since 1918. Postmaster-General, 1922-1923. Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1921-1924.

extreme, and I expressed the opinion at the time that there was only one man in the country who understood it, the man who had unravelled the chaos he had found, and had rebuilt the recruiting system for the Army on lines to meet the peculiar and intricate conditions of the war—Auckland Geddes. Many months, however, were yet to pass before even that arch-experimentalist, Mr. Lloyd George, ventured to exalt a Brigadier-General to be a Minister of the Crown and the head of a great Government department, and by that time the situation was almost beyond recall.

Another complication was added to the recruiting situation in the latter part of 1916 by the failure to obtain men from Ireland to fill the ranks of the Ulster and South Irish Divisions, which were rapidly diminishing. Wild schemes were put forward by Irishmen for raising new units, but without any guarantee that they could be maintained, which simply meant a repetition of the "class" battalions that were raised in the early days of the war, only to die out for want of reserves. At first a suggestion was made by Mr. Lloyd George in September, 1916, to Sir Edward Carson and Mr. John Redmond to amalgamate the Ulster and the 16th Irish Divisions. This, however, was not proceeded with. Then followed a proposal that the War Office recruiting branch should conduct an intensified recruiting campaign in Ireland. The moment for that had passed when Mr. Asquith temporized with the Irish after the Easter rebellion, and my views on the matter were expressed in a letter to Sir John Maxwell at Dublin on 22nd October, 1916 :—

I feel strongly that if the military authorities endeavour to stir up recruiting (in Ireland) they may lay themselves open to a charge of having disturbed the country by their action, although, of course, there would be no truth in it. The state of politics on your side of the water is such that the Irish would, I feel sure, be only too glad to clutch at any straw, and magnify it to serve their own

political ends. For this reason at the Army Council the other day I declined to do anything further in the way of Irish recruiting, and suggested that if the voluntary system is to be continued the only chance of success, in my opinion, would lie in Redmond and Carson each organizing a recruiting campaign on their own lines in their respective parts of Ireland, and handing over the recruits to us for training. My own impression is that neither one nor the other have any intention of doing anything, and therefore it is impossible for us to move further in the matter.

In the end it was decided that both the Irish Divisions were to be filled up with Englishmen, and the same action had to be followed for similar reasons with the Welsh Division early in 1917.

In order to attempt to cover the barrenness of the land, continual complaints were made to the War Office that men were taken from these particular Divisions, or units in them, and drafted into others. As the war progressed the necessity of making the Army more fluid as regards men became more and more imperative. For instance, after heavy fighting, the battalions of a Division which had suffered severely might have no reserves of their own available, and yet had to be made up to strength as soon as possible. The following letters written on the subject sufficiently explain the difficulties and the methods necessary to cope with them.

Writing to Mr. Montagu on 2nd September, 1916, in answer to a complaint on the subject, I said :—

What actually happens is that France indents on us for the number of men required per battalion, and we send them out by *regiments*. That is to say, we may send out to France 1,000 men belonging to one regiment and when they arrive in France they are drafted to such battalions of that regiment as are likely to require to be made up to full strength at once in conformity with the plans of the General Staff.

Also it may be necessary where the supply of men for any particular regiment is short to supplement it from other regiments in the same recruiting district, and that accounts for your informant's remarks about men wearing their own badges.

To Sir E. Carson, in reply to a complaint that men had been taken from the Ulster Division, I wrote on 9th January, 1917 :—

I was told to carry out an almost impossible task of sending 150,000 men to France for British infantry within six weeks, and was able to manage it, but at the expense of getting men from every available source. The men mentioned by the Lord Mayor of Belfast were a dozen men who were taken from the (Ulster) Engineers among 5,000 I took from the corps as a whole, and were transferred to infantry. Incidentally while we do our utmost to keep the Ulster Division intact as regards its infantry, and to draw only on such reserves of its own as it may have, it is quite impossible to carry out the same system in regard to its engineers and artillery.

The above extracts show the line which had to be taken in regard to complaints which poured in from persons who did not grasp the fact that in a great war heavy casualties can only be quickly replaced if the Army organization is capable of the utmost fluidity. This was attained as the war progressed, the one proviso being that nationalities were not to be mixed, except as before mentioned in the cases of the Irish and Welsh Divisions. In a war in which the whole nation is engaged *esprit de corps* must be for the Army as a whole and for the nation, rather than for the smaller units whose names live in the history of the wars of the past.

To turn for a moment from the sublime to the ridiculous, it was in the autumn of 1916 that the order was published allowing officers and men of the Army to be clean-shaved, if they so desired. The history of an innovation which, according to club gossip, many old martinets considered would demoralize the Army is not without interest. The orders governing the limitations of hair-growing in the Army are, of course, based on the question of cleanliness. A soldier with long hair and a pronounced "beaver" would not find it easy to keep himself clean, especially on active service or on manœuvres, hence restrictions.

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In 1913, when General Sir Charles Douglas was Inspector-General of the Home Forces, reports were constantly received from him in regard to the infringement of the order that moustaches were to be worn, the culprits being generally officers of the cavalry and artillery. The usual letters were written to commands calling attention to this disobedience of the King's Regulations, but without much effect.

Being then responsible, under the Adjutant-General, for the discipline of the Army, I discussed the matter with Sir Spencer Ewart, and it was agreed that as it was undesirable to take very drastic action the question of amending the order should be dealt with. So a memorandum for the Army Council was drawn up in which I traced the origin of the military moustache from the days of the Croatian hussars, who evidently considered that a fierce moustache would assist in terrifying their enemies, much in the same way as Chinese soldiers adopted awe-inspiring masks as part of their uniform. The point was then developed that clean-shaven British infantry had fought and conquered under Wellington and other great leaders, and that apparently neither Marlborough, Napoleon, or Wellington had failed to win battles because they clean-shaved. It was, therefore, suggested that officers and men should be allowed to clean shave if they so desired. The Army Council after some debate approved the proposal, which, however, was pigeon-holed.

During the earlier part of the war the regulation regarding moustaches was enforced, and I well remember when Auckland Geddes first reported to me in France greeting him with : " What the devil do you mean by coming to the Adjutant-General's Staff without a moustache ? " He thereupon grew one, but we neither of us liked it. In the summer of 1916 a case was brought to my notice of a wretched officer of the New Army who had been court-martialled for being clean-shaven. In his defence he made the ingenious excuse that by profession he was an actor, and that if he

grew a moustaché it would spoil his upper lip and militate against his success when he returned to the stage after the war. I thereupon drew the former papers on moustaches from the registry, asked my colleagues on the Army Council if they had any views on the subject, to which apparently they were quite indifferent, and finally obtained the approval of His Majesty the King.

On 8th October, 1916, the order allowing all ranks to grow or not to grow, moustaches according to their fancy was signed, care being taken to forbid the cultivation, by those who decided not to shave the upper lip, of the type known as the "Charlie Chaplin," a point on which His Majesty was insistent. I dropped into a barber's shop and set the example that evening, as I was only too glad to be rid of the unsightly bristles to which I had for many years been condemned by obedience to regulations. If a man can grow a presentable moustache and thereby improve his appearance, by all means let him do it ; but Nature is not kind to all men in that respect, and when some years later I had occasion to inspect troops in Ireland I was struck with the smart, cleanly appearance of the young soldiers who, under former regulations, would have been disfigured with downy-looking growths on their upper lips. I hope the present rule may not be interfered with by future Army reformers, because, apart from all other considerations, it is, I believe, popular in the Army and in the Territorial Force.

As if the energies of the nation were not at this time fully occupied, it was decided by the Government that a scheme was to be worked out to enable soldiers on service in various theatres of war to record their votes if, and when, a General Election took place. The amount of work for this purpose thrown on record offices was appalling, and from accounts which filtered through from across the Channel when the election did occur, the whole thing was treated more or less as a joke by the men in the trenches.

It had therefore, happily, the advantage of cheering up the Army.

The mention of this electioneering campaign among armies in the field leads up to a precedent which was created during the Great War, and which, from the experience then gained, may not, it is hoped, be tolerated in the future—the presence of Members of Parliament in official positions with an army. In peace time an officer who is elected to Parliament is either seconded by his unit, or is placed on half-pay, so long as he holds his seat. It was only natural that when war broke out many Members of Parliament wished to take their share of danger at the front, especially those who had served previously in the Army, or had received some military training, and the services of many were most valuable. But once the established rule was broken it was impossible to discriminate, with the result that many who volunteered would certainly have been more useful at Westminster than in Army areas, while others took advantage of their position either to send home complaints which, on inquiry, were as a rule found to be groundless, or to use the knowledge which they had gained across the Channel for their own political purposes on returning to England. But, quite apart from these reasons, it may be taken as a fact that the presence of a Member of Parliament in a subordinate military position is disturbing to most soldiers, especially those who may be his immediate military superiors. Several times as Adjutant-General I pressed that this anomaly should be put a stop to, but unsuccessfully, although I have reason to believe that the civil members of the Army Council agreed in principle; indeed, in one glaring case that came to light in 1918, the then Secretary of State recorded his opinion that “nobody realizes better than I do the very anomalous position that a Member of Parliament who is serving as a soldier is in.” For the sake of the Army, I hope that in future wars the anomaly will not be countenanced, and

surely it is a reflection on Parliament itself if members can be spared from their duties at a time when the nation is in peril. As a member pithily summed up the position during a debate in Parliament, “ The function of the House of Commons is to legislate. Its function is not to go to any part of the world where there is trouble.”

CHAPTER X.

[1917.]

IN spite of the appointment of a Director-General of National Service in December, 1916, and of the advent of a Government pledged "to get on with war," the year 1917 opened gloomily in regard to the prospect of keeping the armies in the field up to strength. At the end of January, 1917, the deficit on requirements for the Army amounted to 48,869 physically fit men, and 5,462 men of lower physical categories, and in the following August these deficits had increased to 347,560 and 39,143 respectively.

Untiring representations by the Army Council failed to induce the Government to take the only line which would have ensured the full weight of the nation being thrown into the scales of war. It must not be supposed that the military mind was concentrated on the Army alone to the exclusion of industries essential to the preservation of the national life and to the maintenance of our allies. What the soldiers pressed for was the systematic organization of the civil as well as the military resources of the Empire by a general liability to national service. Committees without end sat and investigated the needs of various trades and requirements of Government departments, recommendations were made only to be put aside or watered down owing to pressure from various interests. As the year wore on the Russian revolution not only eased the situation for our enemies in the field but caused the Government to deal even more tenderly with representations by the spokesmen of Labour, who as the war progressed showed them-

selves more and more antagonistic to compulsion of any kind. In May, 1917, the Prime Minister delivered himself of the opinion that owing to Labour opposition it would be impossible to get more men for the Army.

The expected advent of America into the war at this time gave a further excuse to temporize in the hope that the intervention of this new ally would relieve any further strain on the country. But many months were to pass before American troops became an effective factor in the field, and there were no grounds for the political optimism which disregarded the steady decrease in the numerical strength of our forces.

During this time, the first half of 1917, recommendations were made by the Director-General of National Service, which were examined by the War Cabinet and referred by that body to Committees and to various Government departments, much apparent activity being displayed, but the net result of it all was that the men were not forthcoming, one contributing cause being that certain Government departments refused to be controlled by Cabinet decisions.

The activities of the recruiting branch were not confined only to dealing with men in the mass, but occasionally were obliged to descend to individual cases, such as when an eminent Cabinet Minister found that an Empire crisis would supervene if his butler, a superior individual of military age, was sent to fight. He was informed that no man could be exempted except on the authority of a Cabinet Minister, whereupon he signed the authority himself, and the Empire for the moment was saved !

Early in July, 1917, a threatened strike of munition workers on a large scale helped to increase the nerve strain in high quarters, and proposals were made that in order to counteract the spirit of unrest, soldiers from France should harangue the public from street corners, and six members of Parliament were given a joy ride in France to collect material with which to soothe industrial circles

at home, measures which confirmed the view that a policy of tinkering still held the field.

At last at the end of July, 1917, the Prime Minister realized that a change must be made, and that recruiting for the Army as well as the allotment of men for essential industries must be handed over to one department, which would be vested with powers considerably greater than those wielded by the Director-General of National Service.

The personal relations between myself, as representing the recruiting side of the Army Council, and Mr. N. Chamberlain had been consistently cordial, but officially the two departments often clashed owing to the War Office views that, while time was passing, little result was apparent from the activities of the National Service Department. To a proposal that the whole of the Army recruiting machine should be handed over to National Service I was unable to agree, for the reason that such a step until the National Service Department was a going concern, asserting its authority throughout all Government departments, might leave the Army hopelessly stranded without the means, or the power, to extract even the inadequate numbers which continued to dribble in. If the proposals put forward by the military members of the Army Council to the Government in November, 1916, that the whole of the existing machinery dealing with man-power should be amalgamated under National Service had been accepted, the recruiting branch of the War Office would automatically have been transferred. Under the scheme with which the Government decided to experiment, such a step was impossible to contemplate. I had many conversations with the Director-General, and was only too anxious to help in any way that would not still further reduce the flow of recruits.

Mr. Neville Chamberlain had been saddled with an almost hopeless task, and was no doubt thankful to be rid of it. The eminence to which he has since risen would seem to indicate that

the control of old-established Government departments does not offer the same difficulties as the creation of an entirely novel organization.

The next task of the Government was to find a man to undertake the reorganization of the National Service Department. Auckland Geddes was approached as to his willingness to go as assistant to whatever politician might be selected, and promptly refused the proposal. The inference of the offer was too obvious. The man who, for over a year, had studied day and night the whole question of man-power and had it at his fingers' ends would have been in a dependent position, unable to fight for what he considered essential, and at the mercy of a master possibly influenced by considerations totally foreign to the object at stake.

The Prime Minister then approached Mr. Shortt,* who had lately actively criticized the Government policy in the House of Commons, a step which apparently did not find favour among the Prime Minister's colleagues, as on 11th August, 1917, Auckland Geddes was offered the appointment of Minister of National Service, together with a seat in Parliament and the status of a Cabinet Minister. Writing to the Adjutant-General in France on 24th August, 1917, I gave my private opinion of the step that had been taken :—

The last recruiting return has dropped below 1,000, a figure it has never reached since I was A.G. However, I know that when Geddes gets really into the saddle, in about a month's time, if it is humanly possible to get men he will get them; but, of course, what clogs the whole machine is the fear the Government have of Labour and the trade unions.

It must not be thought that the advent of Utopia removed all anxiety in regard to the upkeep of the Army—far from it—and

* The Rt. Hon. Edward Shortt, K.C. M.P. for West Newcastle, 1910-1922. Home Secretary, 1919-1922.

many were the friendly fights waged with my old Director of Recruiting, but the War Office felt that the Minister of National Service was a man who knew the whole detail of his department without being dependent on subordinates, and who would put up a fight for what he might decide would be in the best interests of the nation, whether those interests were civil or military.

The increased powers given to the Minister of National Service enabled him to hold the balance between the demands of the fighting services and the agencies on which depended the civil life of the country, a task of supreme difficulty in view of ever-changing conditions, and of the constant political pressure on the Government. A little more courage on the part of the Government in 1915, or even in the early days of 1916, would have rendered national service an effective weapon towards the prosecution of the war, and have eliminated the enormous waste of time and energy expended on abortive discussions and experiments to discover remedies for a situation that grew worse day by day, irritating the working classes, and causing those responsible for the upkeep of the Army in the field to wonder if the Government, in spite of voluble protestations, really intended to compel victory. The number of men taken for the Army during the last months of 1917 was, month by month, the lowest since the commencement of the war, and at a time when the new campaign in Italy tended to increase the wastage which in France during the winter months inclined to diminish, thus in past years enabling a larger pool of men to be collected for operations in the spring.

From the early days of the war the War Office had in various directions called in the assistance of women to replace men in different capacities, mainly for clerical duties. The Women's Legion, raised by Lady Londonderry and officially recognized in August, 1915, was largely employed in work in connection with cookery and various household duties under the Quartermaster-General's Department, and later on in motor-driving in the United

Kingdom, while V.A.D.'s under the British Red Cross Society, St. John's Ambulance and other kindred societies, were working in military hospitals, both in England and overseas.

Owing to the strain produced by the war on the man-power of the nation, it became essential to widen the scope of women's work, and to organize in the direction of using women in every possible employment where they could replace men, both at home and with the armies in the field. Soon after I returned to the War Office, in 1916, my private secretary, a young, energetic civil servant, expressed a wish to "do his bit" at the front, which I instantly fell in with, and replaced him by a lady who had had some experience of War Office work. The experiment was an unqualified success, my personal office, I found, acquiring the reputation of getting things done quickly, and of satisfying visitors who came to make inquiries, assets in any Government office if only to refute the accusations so often made in these respects against the official atmosphere of Whitehall.

The scheme for the general employment of women, which gradually, and not without opposition, materialized, was to create a body of women for service both in the British Isles and in theatres of war who would undertake every kind of work within their physical capacity, except that in connection with hospitals, which was already provided for, thus relieving men who would become available in other directions. The corps was to be organized on lines similar to other Army departments under the Director of Organization, with a lady at its head responsible directly to the Army Council through the Adjutant-General, and supervisors were to be appointed for each of the various trades embraced within the organization, together with "officers" of subordinate rank for the preservation of discipline and control of work.

On 26th January, 1917, Lord Derby invited several ladies whose names were prominent in schemes for the utilization of women's work to a conference on the subject at the War Office.

As a result the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (W.A.A.C.) was launched early in February, 1917, Mrs. Chalmers Watson, M.A.,* a sister of Eric and Auckland Geddes, being appointed Chief Controller, with Mrs. Leach† as Deputy, and Mrs. Gwynne-Vaughan‡ as Chief Controller in France.

Training centres were at once formed where the necessary instruction was given in the different employments, which embraced :—

Intelligence	Electric lighting in power
Censor's office	houses
Telephonists	Aircraft repair depots
Telegraphists	Motor drivers
Clerking in all branches	Orderlies
Record work for British forces	Cooks
at home and abroad, and also	Waitresses
for American Army	Canteens
Various kinds of work for the	Passport offices
Royal Army Ordnance De-	Storekeepers
partment	Bakers

every effort being made to inculcate a feeling of *esprit de corps* and discipline. Uniform was provided for all women proceeding overseas and for those at home whose duties took them into camps or barracks. By the month of April, 1917, the first W.A.A.C., mostly original members of the Women's Legion, had been sent over to France, and many hundreds were at work in military centres in Great Britain in substitution of men. The corps finally reached a strength of 40,000, of whom nearly 9,000 were

* Mrs. Chalmers Watson, M.D., C.B.E. Hon. Secretary, Queen Victoria's Jubilee Nurses' Scottish Central Council. President, Women's United Services Club.

† Dame Florence E. Simpson, D.B.E. Commandant, Cookery Section, Women's Legion, 1915-1917. Controller of Inspection, W.A.A.C., 1917-1918. Controller-in-Chief, Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps, 1918-1920.

‡ Dame Helen C. I. Gwynne-Vaughan, D.B.E., D.Sc. (London), Hon. LL.D. (Glasgow). Chief Controller, W.A.A.C., and afterwards Q.M.A.A.C. in France, 1917-1918. Commandant, Women's Royal Air Force, 1918-1919.

serving in theatres of war, a corresponding saving of men being thus effected. This new departure of enrolling women as part and parcel of the Army was not carried through without considerable opposition and criticism, as a rule grossly unfair, and mainly from critics of their own sex.

Towards the latter part of 1917 an insidious campaign sprang up reflecting on the behaviour of the corps, in its moral aspect, both at home and in France. Those who had knowledge of the personnel and of the discipline maintained by the officers of the corps, discipline erring at times on the side of severity, courted the fullest investigation, but, as so often happens, the people who were most energetic in throwing mud preferred to do so from under cover, or from positions which would shelter them from exposure.

One example which came to my personal knowledge was that of a Colonial Bishop who, misled by reports which he had heard, both in Canada and in England, had made reference in public reflecting on the behaviour of the corps. I sent for him, and had a long talk, ascertaining that he was personally ignorant of the subject and had indeed never set eyes on a W.A.A.C. It was arranged that he should go to one of the big training centres and see with his own eyes the work that was being done, and judge for himself from the hundreds of women under training. He returned converted, and wrote me an extremely courteous letter, to which I replied in the following terms : —

27th February, 1918.

My dear Bishop,

I was extremely glad to get your letter of 17th February, which I should have answered before, but have been away for a few days.

It is a great pleasure to me that you find the rumours you heard were without foundation. I know very well the source of these rumours, and why they are put about; they are partly the product of interested individuals, and partly that of politicians who have their own axe to grind. Ever since the W.A.A.C. was started I have taken a personal interest in the matter and watched it as closely as

possible; but I should hardly be human if I thought that in an organization now comprising 30,000 women, drawn from every class of the country, there will not sometimes be a lapse from the narrow path. I can, however, in justice to them say that these lapses have been extremely few and far between, and even then the cause existed before the women joined the corps.

Your able advocacy on the other side of the ocean will go far, I know, to put things in their proper perspective with those among whom you work.

In order to put a further check on the rumours which were flying about, Mr. Roberts,* the Minister of Labour, who was always out to help in any matter connected with the Army, arranged for a party of five ladies selected by himself to investigate matters, both at home and in France. The report of these ladies cleared the air considerably, and gave the lie to the veiled allegations that had been put about. Statistics proved that what may be termed "moral slips" amounted to .1 *per cent.* of the whole corps, a record that I think will bear comparison with that of any large association of either sex.

In order to avoid confusion at a time when the Navy and the Air Force took a leaf out of the Army book and organized women's corps of their own, it was definitely decided that all work in France for the three services in which women were employed should be done by the W.A.A.C., and at the urgent request of the American Headquarter Staff a detachment of the W.A.A.C., specially trained in military record work, was loaned to the American base office, where their work won great praise from our allies.

In February, 1918, the corps unfortunately lost the services through ill-health of Mrs. Chalmers Watson, who was succeeded as Controller-in-Chief by Mrs. Leach (Dame Florence Simpson).

The activities of the corps were by no means confined to the back areas in France, many of the detachments being well forward

* The Rt. Hon. George Henry Roberts, P.C., M.P. Parliamentary Secretary, Board of Trade, 1916-1918. Minister of Labour, 1917-1918. Food Controller, 1919-1920.

on the Lines of Communication. At Flixecourt the W.A.A.C. were employed as cooks and waitresses at the Army School, and when the German advance on the Somme in March, 1918, swept forward reports were received that the W.A.A.C. detachment at the school stayed on after the students had left, feeding relays of tired and hungry men, supplying unlimited tea to wandering officers, and directing them where to report. Not content with this devotion, they refused to take up motor transport, and when they left walked the fifteen miles into Abbeville. This was the class of women that ignorant busybodies, who did not lift a hand to help the country in its need, thought fit to abuse and vilify. A sufficient answer is found in the record of the corps, and in the following notice published by the Secretary of the War Office on 9th April, 1918 :—

As a mark of Her Majesty's appreciation of the good services rendered by the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps both at home and abroad since its inauguration, and especially of the distinction which it has earned in France by its work for the Army during the recent fighting on the Western front, Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to assume the position and title of Commandant-in-Chief of the corps, which in future will bear the name of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps.

In the spring of 1917 the shortage of medical personnel of all grades began to give cause for anxiety, at a time when, owing to pressure by the Admiralty, the hospital accommodation in France had to be increased. It appeared that the Navy were anxious to reduce the cross-channel services to the smallest possible dimensions owing to the submarine menace, and this necessitated the opening up of large hospitals on the heights above Trouville. Happily, the first American hospitals arrived in England about this time, of which six were eventually attached to the British Army in France, and helped considerably to ease the situation.

The keenness of the staffs of these hospitals was a joy to witness. The matron of the first hospital to arrive in England

told me that it was a race between her hospital and another who should get to England first. She and her nurses had not had time to get their uniforms made, but rather than be delayed an hour they took the materials along with them and made the uniforms on board ship.

It is a curious thing that in every war in which the country has been engaged for many years past the Army Medical Services have always been a kind of "Aunt Sally" for the press, the politicians, certain civilian medicos, and those excellent people who cannot resist writing to the newspapers about every subject of which, as often as not, they are totally ignorant. In many campaigns there have been more than good and sufficient grounds for complaint, the root cause being official stinginess in peace time. In the late war, however, I can honestly affirm that, as regards the European theatre, the medical services, though at times hard pressed, were never on the verge of a breakdown.

That the organization stood the test of the enormous inflation that was forced upon it, even after taking into account the invaluable aid rendered by the recognized heads of the civil profession, and by the British Red Cross and other kindred societies, was due to the untiring work and admirable organizing powers of Lieut.-General Sir Alfred Keogh,* who, from the days of the South African War to the time he retired in 1910, devoted his abilities to the task of building up an organization which would stand the test of war. It stood the test of a war greater than even he visualized. Happily for the Army, Lord Kitchener recalled him to his former post of Director-General of Army Medical Services when war broke out in 1914, and during the two years it was my privilege to work with him I learnt the secret of the success of the organization to which he had given his life's work.

The official history of the medical services during the Great

* Lieut.-General Sir Alfred Keogh, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., C.H. Director-General, Army Medical Service, 1904-1910 and 1914-1918.

War is of itself an historical monument to his achievements. And yet this was the man against whom a dead set was made in Parliament and in the press in the summer of 1917, proposals even being made to replace him at the head of the Army Medical Service by a civilian. The sources of this campaign were known at the War Office—a combination of personal jealousy, newspaper propaganda, and political intrigue.

Two of the main planks of the attack were almost amusing. It was urged that the medical inspection of recruits in Great Britain should be handed over to civilian doctors, at a time when, actually, out of nine hundred medical officers engaged on the work forty-five only had ever been in the Army Medical Service, of whom twenty-one were actually serving. One of the great difficulties against which the recruiting department had to contend during the first three years of the war was the dearth of experienced medical officers, and the necessity of relying upon the services of inexperienced civil examiners, especially at the time when impersonation, fraudulent practices, and every possible device was brought into play to avoid service by those called up for the Army. The whole case, supported by facts and figures, is ably set forth in the first volume of the "Medical History of the War," and clearly demonstrates that any shortcomings were due, not to any weakness in the organization of the Army Medical Services, but to the general unpreparedness of the country for war.

The second main plank of the attack was the contention that hospitals in the war areas were overstaffed, in consequence of which medical officers were idling away their time and might be usefully employed elsewhere. The idea probably emanated from individuals who, during "joy rides" in France, visited hospitals which were at the moment empty because heavy fighting was not in progress at the front, but who were oblivious of the fact that at any moment such a rush of wounded might descend on every hospital on the Lines of Communication as to tax their capacity

and the energies of the staffs to a point of exhaustion. The forecasts, based on closely studied experience, enabled the authorities to maintain a scale of hospital accommodation with the necessary staff, which, while often strained, was never insufficient for the needs of the Army.

It is curious to reflect that just about the time when this excitement was at its height, a Surgeon-General together with an expert on tropical diseases was sent to investigate the medical arrangements in East Africa, about which rumours had reached the War Office. The campaign in East Africa under General Smuts* had been administered by the Indian Government up to the time when the War Office took over responsibility for Mesopotamia, and when there was a suspicion that everything was not well in the medical arrangements in East Africa steps were at once taken to ascertain the cause. The report which was eventually received indicated a state of affairs little less alarming than that which had made so much stir in regard to Mesopotamia. This report was sent to the Government, by whom it was passed to General Smuts who was then in England. It came back to the War Office with an instruction to the effect that it was not considered advisable that it should be made public. Would a similar decision have been given, I wonder, if the responsible General had not been a distinguished Colonial politician?

While on the subject of the Medical Services it may not be out of place to refer to the irritation justly caused, especially among the lower ranks of the Royal Army Medical Corps, by the constant references in the press to the good work done by the "Red Cross" at the front and in the danger zones. To the ordinary reader the implication was that the work was being carried out by the British Red Cross and other societies, whereas, of course, the references could only be to the men of the Royal Army Medical

* General the Rt. Hon. Jan Christian Smuts, P.C., C.H. Commanded troops in British East Africa, 1916-1917.

Corps, who wore red cross brassards on their sleeves to all appearance identical with those worn by the civilian societies. No one would desire to belittle in the smallest degree the admirable work performed by the Red Cross and other civilian societies, work carried on, except in isolated instances, in the back areas, nor I feel sure would members of those societies covet the meed of praise to the self-sacrificing devotion of the Army medical personnel. It is a small matter perhaps, but was resented at the time a good deal by the R.A.M.C. rank and file. In future wars "our special correspondent" will no doubt ensure a discrimination by which such pin-pricks may be avoided.

In August, 1917, a large batch of promotions to the rank of Surgeon-General was gazetted, based on selection instead of as formerly on seniority, which greatly strengthened the efficiency of the Medical Service, and gave that encouragement which is so essential to ambitious younger men. In the early days of the war certain promotions had been made, which, to put it mildly, caused surprise at our General Headquarters in France. On my return to the War Office in 1916, I found that Lord Kitchener, in spite of protests, had insisted on promotion by seniority, which at that time was an especially unfortunate decision.

Early in 1918 a change in the title of Surgeon-General was after some discussion authorized, the "Surgeon" being dropped, and the rank assimilated to that of other general officers. This gave great satisfaction to the Medical Service, and I was glad to have been instrumental in persuading the Army Council to consent to the change. Whatever objections there may have been in the past when the rank of general officer implied direct command over men, the Great War had introduced all sorts of anomalies into the hierarchy of military rank. civilian officials who had any connection with the war blossoming into generals, and in the sister service in one notable instance even into an admiral. There was therefore no logical argument by which the senior officers of the Army

medical profession should be condemned to retain an old-fashioned title which they disliked, and which, rightly or wrongly, they considered reflected on the importance of the rôle they were appointed to carry out.

A few words on the discipline of our great military machine may not be out of place. During the summer of 1917 attempts to undermine the discipline of the Army at home by Socialists, and "Stop the war" propagandists, had given some cause for anxiety. Towards the end of May *The Daily News and Leader* published a large advertisement calling a meeting at the Albert Hall, Leeds, to discuss the establishment of a "Council of Soldiers' and Workmen's Delegates," one of the chief movers being Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who has since risen to be Prime Minister. The Government decided that it would be undesirable to suppress further advertisements or to prohibit the meeting itself, though it was of a revolutionary character, but directed that steps should be taken to prevent soldiers in uniform attending—not a very heroic policy in view of the issue at stake. The fact that men returning from the front on leave, or wounded, or sick, saw daily thousands of able-bodied young men walking about the streets did not help to render those who had volunteered for, or had been forced into military service more contented with their lot.

No experienced soldier was so optimistic as to expect from the hastily raised levies that were thrown into the field the same standard of discipline as that which enabled the "Old Contemptibles" to rally unshaken and drive the enemy back over the Marne after the retreat from Mons; but there were times as the war progressed when the possible loosening of discipline, both at home and on the Continent, fostered by sentimental effusions in Parliament and in certain sections of the press, gave cause for great anxiety. In war the best-laid schemes, the most brilliant generalship, will fail if the troops are not imbued with a sense of

discipline sufficient to withstand the stress of good or evil fortune, for success may be as subversive of discipline as defeat.

The regulations for the enforcement of discipline in our Army are light compared to those of other countries, the main factor being a sense of sympathetic comradeship between officers and men. Experience during the war proved that these regulations were sufficient, if properly applied by officers and non-commissioned officers of proved capacity in the handling of men, a class which, however, became more and more scarce as the Army grew in size. This is a contingency which must be faced whenever it becomes necessary to augment the forces of the Crown beyond the numbers laid down in peace for the Army and its reserves. It is, therefore, imperative that there should be no lowering of the standard which in war proved sufficient, but not excessive, and which, speaking with some experience, I consider should not be further reduced or weakened.

In the spring of each year, when the Army Annual Bill comes up for consideration in the House of Commons, attempts are made to introduce amendments into the disciplinary code having for their object the gradual weakening of the bonds which hold the military structure together. Such attempts, if successful, can have but one result—the deterioration of the Army as a fighting force, and consequent failure when the days of reckoning come upon the country.

Before leaving the subject of Army discipline there is one point which came prominently to notice during the war, namely, the different standards of discipline that existed as between the British and Dominion forces. It is only necessary, without stressing the point, to refer to the fact that the death penalty for any crime on active service is eliminated from the Australian Military Code. The result was that not only were a large number of Australians in a constant state of desertion in France, but the troops of Great Britain and of the other Dominions and Colonies

naturally felt the injustice of a state of affairs whereby, while one of their comrades was liable to be shot for desertion, or some other equally serious crime, an Australian escaped with a term of imprisonment, to be remitted at the conclusion of the war. Repeated representations were made by our Government to the Australian authorities, but without avail. When schemes for the co-operation of the forces of the Empire are being examined it will be as well if consideration is given to the necessity for a uniform disciplinary code if British and Dominion troops should be required to serve under one command.

Just about this time—August, 1917—the situation in the railway world became uneasy, and several managers were fearful of a general strike. As a matter of precaution a Bill was drafted to call up all men within the military age employed on railways for service in the Army. The excitement however died down, and it was not necessary to enforce the effective methods of our friends the French in dealing with strikes.

To ensure that no stone should be left unturned to make use of every possible class of man for military service, and in consequence of optimistic forecasts by persons belonging to or interested in the Jewish persuasion, steps were taken in the autumn of 1917 to form Jewish battalions, composed mainly of Jews whose linguistic qualifications were confined to Hebrew, Russian, or Yiddish, large numbers of whom it was suggested would be found in the East End of London. Jewish officers and non-commissioned officers already serving in the Army were allowed to volunteer for these battalions, which were organized and trained at Plymouth by Lieut.-Colonel J. H. Patterson, D.S.O., who had rendered good service at Gallipoli in command of the Zion Mule Corps.

The raising of these units was not without its humorous side. The East End Jew was by no means over anxious to risk his skin for the land of his adoption, and a good many made themselves

scarce as soon as they were called up. Then the fun began. The police were given the name of the absentee—for example, Isaac Cohen—but when they searched the locality they found perhaps a hundred Isaac Cohens, all very much alike as regards features, colouring and hair, and it took a long time to run down the particular Isaac that was wanted. Then, again, the heads of the Jewish community themselves were somewhat at variance in regard to the details of the scheme, such as the name of the corps, and the badges that would be suitable to indicate its origin. One Jewish committee, representing the more wealthy classes, could not see eye to eye with another committee of a more democratic type, of whom one Jabotinsky appeared to be the most violent partisan. This gentleman, after the war, transferred his activities to Palestine.

It need hardly be said that these discussions on the proposed name and badge of the corps produced many ribald proposals from the younger members of the Staff in the War Office, and various suggestions based on Old Testament history found their way on to my table. In the end, the three battalions that were raised became affiliated to the Royal Fusiliers, and a suitable badge, the Shield of David, I think, was agreed to. The results, however, as regards numbers were disappointing, especially after the pressure that had been applied by prominent Jews and M.P.'s, notably Mr. J. D. Kiley, member for the Tower Hamlets Division, to form a separate organization. The three battalions eventually went to Egypt, and were employed there and in the land of their origin.

I forget what particular tune was selected as the march past of these units, but remember that one proposal was "There is a Happy Land, far, far away," rather an ironical suggestion, seeing that many of the rank and file had no desire to leave London.

During September of this year, 1917, by a piece of extraordinarily good luck I was able to pay a visit to the Italian front. I

had arranged a tour of inspection to certain hospitals in France and to the Adjutant-General's office at Rouen, when Lord Derby, our Secretary of State, invited me to accompany him to Italy. Starting from Paris on 8th September, we reached General Cadorna's headquarters at Udine—once the headquarters of Massena—on the 10th, and during the next ten days completed a tour of the Italian front from Monfalcone, on the Adriatic, up to the valley of the Isonzo, to Caporetto, and thence by Belluno (the Dolomite country) down the valley of the Brenta to Venice, which we reached on 20th. Little did we then think that within a few weeks the disaster of Caporetto would have overwhelmed our kindly hosts, and laid the smiling land we had passed through at the mercy of our common enemies.

The usual fight for men for the Army went steadily on during the closing months of 1917, although now that Auckland Geddes was safely installed as Minister of National Service, the onus of pressing the Government to take effective measures was transferred from the Army Council to his shoulders. One source of leakage was the existence of the Volunteers, a body of men who were useless from a military point of view, but whose continuance gave tribunals the opportunity of exempting men for military service who belonged to the organization.

In reply to a complaint from the General commanding one of the commands at home, regarding this wastage of man-power, I had written on 18th May, 1917 :—

I have looked into the figures you refer to in your note of 14th instant, and so far as we can trace them, the 37,000 Volunteers in your command are all men who are in possession of tribunal exemptions.

We are quite powerless if the tribunals use the Volunteers as a means of exempting men.

From the very beginning I was against the creation of Volunteers, because I was convinced that it would only be an excuse to prevent men getting into the Army, and now that we are suggesting that

men over the military age should join the Army we have come up against it at once.

I fear we can do nothing. I watch these things very closely through my recruiting people, and you may be sure that if I saw my way I should bag the lot.

The Volunteers had a considerable backing in Parliament, which accounted for their existence. If the Volunteers had been recruited only from persons who had been exempted by tribunals on grounds of indispensability in Government and civil occupations, or as members of the Special Constabulary, a very large number of the 246,599 Volunteers would have become available for some form of military service.

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the latter part of 1917 the Ministry of National Service explored every possible avenue for the production of men to keep our armies in the field up to a requisite strength, but the delay on the part of the Government in organizing the department and the natural deference of the Minister to the fears of his colleagues in the Cabinet resulted in an outlook as the year 1918 opened about as gloomy as was possible. Already a scheme was in course of preparation for a reduction in the strength of Divisions in the field from twelve to nine battalions, plus a pioneer battalion to each Division. This was put into effect during the month of February, care being taken to break up battalions with the shortest service to their credit, and to preserve as far as possible Regular battalions, first line Territorial battalions, and the earlier units of the New Army. It would have been less detrimental to efficiency if the change could have been spread over a long period, and as events proved the new organization had hardly been completed before the German attack was launched.

A letter I wrote on 2nd January, 1918, to Henry Wilson, then Chief of the British section of the Supreme War Council at Versailles, with whom I was in constant communication on the man-power question, gives an indication of the anxiety in the War Office circles as the year opened :—

My Dear Henri,

I am very sorry to have missed you yesterday, as I should much have liked to have had a talk.

I spent most of the afternoon in investigating the conclusions of the Cabinet Committee on man-power, and am bound to say it

was not a cheerful opening for the New Year. So far as I can see, as regards the Army, the proposals not only amount to nothing, but if nothing else can be done it will mean a vast diminution of our forces in the field.

Shortly the position is this: I saw Auckland Geddes as soon as the draft report was in my hands. He was very despondent, but said that if the whole of the proposals made by the Cabinet are carried out without any weakening in regard to trade unions or in the House of Commons, he does not expect to be able to give us, up to 31st December, 1918, more than 150,000 A* men and 100,000 lower category men.

On 7th January in continuation of the same subject to Henry Wilson, I wrote :—

As you say, it is a terrifying state of affairs, and unless and until Lloyd George is prepared to really state the condition of affairs to the country, I cannot for the life of me see how it is going to be mended. I have no doubt that next week there will be many speeches in Parliament couched in flowery and patriotic verbiage, but the end of it all is that after reducing the infantry of Divisions from twelve battalions to nine, and after we have got every man that the Cabinet proposes to give us without any diminution by weakening to trade unions or by pledges during the debate (an unthinkable contingency), we shall if we continue to keep fifty-two British Divisions in the field be over 100,000 short in April, a figure which will increase to 260,000 by the end of the year.

Alternatively, if it is desired to keep a certain number of Divisions of nine battalions at full strength in France and Italy during the current year, the number we can maintain will be forty-two. Of course, I am relying on my casualty figures turning out correct. The Prime Minister argues that the casualties under his defensive tactics are not going to be so great. However, knowing a little more about military affairs, and realizing that casualties do not depend upon our own tactics so much as on those of the enemy, I prefer to stick to my figures, which are based upon the most minute and careful calculations since the commencement of the war. Even if there is a small difference on the right side, it will be swallowed up by the Cabinet's decision that men who have been twice wounded are not to return to the fighting line, a decision which will increase the deficit I have already mentioned by some 2,000 a month.

* Men physically fit in every respect for fighting units.

The man-power debate took place in due course and my late Director of Recruiting explained the situation to the House with a subtlety worthy of an old parliamentary hand. I could not refrain from a little friendly chaff in a letter I wrote to him on 19th January, 1918 :—

My Dear Geddes,

I did not write to congratulate you on your maiden speech, for great as it was from a parliamentary point of view, the Biblical quotation that rose to my lips when I had finished reading it was: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" There was a parliamentary touch that brought tears to my eyes, and I have not the faintest doubt that it had the effect of dimming the eyes of those who heard you, so that they were unable to grasp clearly the desperate state into which the Army has fallen. I am quite sure that most of the people there must have thought that you were presenting me with some 450,000 men, and they did not grasp that out of these 120,000 would not be available this year for work in the field, and that while you were giving 150,000 lower categories with one hand you were tearing away I do not know how many more out of the Army with the other for our old friend Maclay* and others. However, I have no doubt at the end of your parliamentary career you will exclaim, with another well-known parliamentarian: "*Had I but served my A.G. as I have served my L.G., he would not in my age have left me naked to my enemies.*"

Yours as always.

Although on the surface I could treat the matter thus lightly the situation was causing the greatest anxiety to the military members of the Army Council. The politicians camouflaged their unwillingness to place the facts before the public with the well worn retorts that the provision of additional artillery, tanks, and other mechanical contrivances rendered a reduction of infantry possible, that the casualties would in future be below the War Office estimate, a most unfortunate prophecy in view of the approaching German offensive, and that numbers of men were still unnecessarily employed in the Army outside the fighting

* The Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph P. Maclay, Bt., P.C., LL.D. Minister of Shipping, 1917-1919.

ranks, a suggestion that had no foundation at this time whatever may have been the case formerly.

On the soldiers' side it was known that while men were being daily drawn from the Army for work in civil occupations an enormous potential reserve of power was being wasted by reason of strikes, short hours, and holidays, in shipbuilding, mines and other trades, while men who were being taken out of the Army for agriculture were streaming away to better paid occupations with the result that further claims were made for men to replace them. In compliance with an urgent request for 4,000 prisoners of war who were skilled in agriculture that number was brought over from France, but on arrival it was discovered that they could not be made use of owing to local trouble over their accommodation, upon which another demand was made for 2,000 men from the Army. The most prejudiced soldier would not contend that the Army was without reproach in the matter of organization and administration under the strain that was placed on it, but had the organization in the civil walks of life approached more nearly to that of the fighting services so far as getting the most out of every man was concerned, the troubles of the Government to find men would have decreased in an appreciable degree.

In the midst of interminable arguments and interdepartmental skirmishing came the German offensive in March, 1918, with casualties among the British troops, not including troops from the Dominions and Colonies, amounting to 269,616 in the months of March and April, the drain continuing throughout the summer and culminating in a figure of 340,723 for the last three complete months of the war. That the Allies weathered the storm was due to the fighting qualities of the men at the front, and not to any foresight on the part of the politicians, who, however, to cover their annoyance, called for a report as to why the Hun had driven our troops back, the question of paucity of men being side-tracked for a search for one or more scapegoats.

As soon as word came through of the numbers of casualties every effort was made to replace them. By dint of all kinds of shifts 90,000 drafts were sent to France at once, at the rate of 20,000 a day, followed by another 50,000 during April. To accomplish this every sort of expedient was resorted to. Men of low physical categories and men from command depots who could hold a rifle were placed under orders, artillery men were borrowed from the Navy, the eyesight test was lowered to admit of men who were otherwise physically fit being classed as "A". Medical officers were drawn from our forces in Italy and borrowed from the Dominions and Americans. In the end the requisite numbers of men were found, but I doubt if the Government would have cared for the fierce light of publicity to have been thrown on the methods which had to be employed, or indeed, in thousands of cases, on the class of men who had to be sent, men who were in reality not fit in any capacity for the theatre of war.

It was a grim satisfaction to witness the state of nerves into which the Cabinet were thrown, one prominent member asking me somewhat plaintively whether I thought the situation was desperate. On many occasions I have noticed how the nerves of Cabinet Ministers become shaken in the face of sudden crises, an unfortunate weakness that may lead to ill-considered and panicky measures. Mr. Asquith was a notable exception. On several such occasions when I was with him he preserved a calmness and composure that were remarkable.

Just before the German offensive the situation in Whitehall was complicated and made more difficult by rumours of an impending change in the vitally important post of Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the driving wheel of the whole military machine.

The origin of the trouble was the creation of an Executive Committee of military experts in Paris with the composition of

which Robertson was unable to agree, and on 18th February he was succeeded as C.I.G.S. by Sir Henry Wilson.

During the controversy Jack Cowans, the Quartermaster-General, and myself had several heart-to-heart discussions as to our position in the event of the project becoming *un fait accompli*. Apart from our responsibility to the Army, a situation might at any moment be created directly affecting our respective departments, when resulting chaos would, of course, be laid at our doors by the wise men of Downing Street. For that we cared little, the position of an Army Councillor being in those days anything but a bed of roses, but we both felt that until our departments became directly involved it was our duty to carry on in order to avoid the dislocation that necessarily must result from a general upheaval in the office at such a time. In my own mind I had considerable doubt as to the permanency of this Executive Committee, and as a matter of fact it failed to function within a month, and disappeared altogether in May, 1918.

To return to the Battle of the Somme. The day after the news of the German advance reached London the Cabinet were startled into feverish activity in order to get men. Proposals were made to raise the age for military service up to fifty-five years, all tribunals to be abolished, and conscription to be enforced in Ireland. It was estimated by the Ministry of National Service that if these and various other proposals were ruthlessly applied a total of 350,000 "A" men and 170,000 men of lower physical categories might be obtained by midsummer. But as the news from France improved so the good resolutions of the Government oozed away, with the result that while for the months of April, May and June the figures rose to an average of about 83,000 a month for all categories, the improvement was only momentary, and by the month of August when our casualties in France amounted to over 73,000 some 30,000 recruits only were forthcoming.

Happily, by that time indications were not wanting that the end of the war could not be long delayed, and, more important still, the American Army had at last made its presence felt in the field, but neither of these facts could justify the position in which our Army found itself through the refusal of the Government to entertain the constantly reiterated demands of the War Office for men, or to heed the warnings repeatedly given to them of the possible results to the forces at the front. That the heart of the country was sound, and that men would have been forthcoming had the public been told the real state of affairs, there was never a doubt, as was evidenced by the fact that during the heavy fighting on the Somme the miners in South Wales came forward in considerable numbers, many of them being brought along by their womenfolk.

The proposal to enforce conscription in Ireland was announced by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on 9th April, 1918, Viscount French being appointed Lord-Lieutenant early in April with increased powers and the status of Cabinet Minister, elaborate arrangements being made to carry out a recruiting campaign as soon as the word was given ; but like so many proposals applicable to that tumultuous island it was still-born.

The only effect of the proposed enforcement of conscription was to unite politicians of every shade in Southern Ireland—Sinn Fein, Hibernians, Nationalists and Labour, reinforced by the Roman Catholic Bishops—in an opposition which, preached from the steps of the church altars, and laid at the feet of President Wilson as the apostle of self-determination, forced the Government to delay and finally quietly to drop their attempt. The official figures showing the percentage of the male population in Great Britain represented by enlistments in the Army during the war is interesting :—

England	...	24'02	Scotland	...	23'71
Wales	...	21'52	Ireland (N. and S.)		6'14

It is often urged that large numbers of Irish joined up either in Colonial contingents or in British units, but the same arguments can be applied equally to the other components of the British Isles, and in any case has very little in it.

In order to obviate the smallest suspicion of any further injustice to Ireland a decision was given to allow Irishmen to enlist in the French Army. The following letter written on 25th June, 1918, to an officer on the Staff at Versailles explains the proposal :—

I have just got hold of a decision of the Cabinet under which no objection will be raised if Irishmen offer themselves privately to the French authorities to be enlisted in the French Army. There has been some correspondence about it, and such men when enlisted will become to all intents and purposes French citizens, and if they apply, when they find they do not like the French Army, for release on the grounds of British citizenship, it will of course be refused. The point I want you to note is that it is most important that we should know the number of Irishmen, if any, who take advantage of this offer, and that the French War Office should keep an exact record and give us the information from time to time. My reason is this: in days to come the Irish M.P.'s will certainly get up in the House and say that a million Irishmen joined the French Army and fought for the Allies, whereas, of course, the actual number will probably be that figure less the six "o's."

A few Irishmen did join up with the French, and several made applications for release as British subjects, finding the regime not to their taste, but were unsuccessful.

It will possibly be a surprise to the uninitiated to know that early in 1918 an organization was afoot, and plans were being worked out, for the demobilization of the armies in the field and at home on their return to civil life. A rehearsal of the demobilization of a unit was held at Prees Heath on 14th March, 1918, to test the proposed arrangements, which proved quite satisfactory in the experimental stage. Apart from the intricacies involved in selecting and demobilizing men by trades in proportion to the

urgency of their return to civil life, the organization was further complicated by the necessity of being ready and able to rapidly remobilize in the event of any hitch occurring during the peace negotiations.

Major-General Burnett-Hitchcock, the Director of Organization in the Adjutant-General's Department, was selected to be Director-General of the branch, which was ready to commence its arduous and complicated work as soon as Government gave the word. It was hardly to be expected that in spite of the most carefully thought-out schemes the task of demobilizing over five million men could be carried out without criticism, or without a measure of discontent fostered by optimistic assurances by politicians, and by the press, to men whose natural anxiety was to find occupation in civil life as soon as possible.

For some reason unknown to me, for I left the War Office in September, 1918, the original scheme whereby the whole of the demobilization arrangements were to be carried out by one branch was readjusted in the direction of allowing certain classes of men to be demobilized by the departments under whom they were actually serving, a state of affairs which resulted in men who had enlisted under identical conditions not receiving identical treatment when their turn came to be demobilized. Even allowing for occasional adjustments necessitated by political and other reasons as the work progressed, far more satisfactory results would have been obtained had the original scheme of having but one authority in control been adhered to.

On 17th April, 1918, Lord Derby informed us at an Army Council meeting that he had accepted the Ambassadorship at Paris, and two days later he left the War Office. From my personal point of view Lord Derby's departure was a great loss. During the sixteen months I had served under him I found him ever ready to listen patiently to my perhaps all too frequent reiterations for a more vigorous policy towards an organized

national effort to win the war whereby every man and woman would have pulled their weight, whether in military or civil life.

Lord Milner took over the seals of office on 19th April. Nothing could have been kinder or more courteous than his attitude, but unfortunately so many calls were made upon his time in directions other than the Army, involving his constant absence from the office, that it was not so easy as formerly to get early decisions on important subjects, which in consequence were held up longer than if he had been able to give his undivided attention to the War Office. Rightly or wrongly, Lord Milner always gave me the impression that he was not in sympathy with the profession of arms, being more drawn towards the more learned walks of life.

The frequent absences of the Secretary of State were particularly unfortunate at this time, as Henry Wilson was obliged to spend a considerable portion of his time in Paris, and shortly afterwards the War Office Staff was further weakened by the disappearance of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, the Director of Operations, a brilliant and experienced soldier. Feeling that he owed it to the country to contradict certain statements which had been made in Parliament he wrote to the papers over his own signature, and as a result was placed on retired pay. I was extremely sorry that this should have happened, but there was no alternative to the drastic action meted out to him, short of allowing any serving soldier to air his views in public. As a matter of fact Maurice's contention that the Prime Minister had misled Parliament by his figures showing the comparative fighting strengths on 1st January, 1917, and 1st January, 1918, was justified. The fighting strength on 1st January, 1918, was some 100,500 less than on 1st January, 1917, the Prime Minister having in his figures included men employed on labour and non-combatant duties, a subtle distinction not appreciated by his audience.

During the month of June, 1918, two questions cropped up entailing considerable discussion accompanied by a certain amount of heat. The first was a crude suggestion, originated I believe by an American, for pooling all the resources of the Allies, men, transport, rations, hospitals, etc. On the 14th April Marshal Foch had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces, and no doubt it appeared to some people only logical that everything should consequently be thrown into a common pool. In theory the idea is sound when a Commander-in-Chief enjoying the confidence of all Allied Governments is forthcoming, and had unity of command been applied when war broke out arrangements without doubt could, and would, have been made to fall in with a general pool system. But by June, 1918, the British Army had been built up into a highly specialized machine tempered as far as conditions of war would admit to the demands of a public opinion ever on the watch to criticize. The Quartermaster-General, Sir J. Cowans, and myself were the two Army Councillors whose departments would be most affected by a common pool, and we did not hesitate to point out forcibly what the result would be.

The items that specially affected my department were rations, hospitals, and reinforcements. The result of pooling rations, a Q.M.G. service, would be that the men would get inferior food, for no army is fed on the same plentiful scale as the British, and inevitable discontent and indiscipline would ensue. If the British soldier is well fed he will do anything, but once tamper with his food and there will be trouble, unless, of course, war conditions render it inevitable for a period.

As regards hospitals, British hospitals were organized and equipped on a scale far beyond that of any of our allies, and if, as would assuredly happen, British soldiers found their way into French hospital trains or hospitals a public outcry would arise through the length and breadth of the land. As a matter of fact isolated cases had already been reported where our soldiers had

found themselves in French hospitals, and after reading the reports I knew what was likely to happen if the facts became public. The supply and organization of reinforcements in our Army differed entirely from that in force on the Continent and in the American Army. I have already touched on the subject and pointed out that while fluidity was essential it could not be carried beyond the point of nationality. Such distinctions would not be understood by a foreign Commander-in-Chief who if, for example, a Highland Division required reinforcing and no Highland reserves were available might order surplus reserves of Guards or South of England men to be sent up. It is needless to comment on the result. Both Jack Cowans and I insisted that if any pooling was decided on, the chief administrative officer on Marshal Foch's Staff must be a British officer. In the end the pooling proposals to a large extent watered themselves down, but even then considerable difficulties were encountered in the reinforcement of Divisions which had been moved to a distance from the British Lines of Communication, and on more than one occasion a senior medical officer had to be sent to ensure reasonable hospital conditions for men who were fighting in French zones. Such proposals in theory look very inviting to those who are unacquainted with the details of Army organization, and who regard the Army as a mere machine to carry out every passing whim of its political masters, but in practice two obstacles are at once in evidence, human nature and national temperament, neither of which can be lightly ignored without danger to the entire fabric.

The second question was not so important, but consumed a considerable amount of time which might have been better employed. How it originated I do not know, but it was evident that Monsieur Clemenceau was not satisfied with the efforts of Great Britain to provide men, and no doubt was unable to understand why our Prime Minister could not tap the large reserve existing in Ireland, a state of affairs which would have been very

soon put right by our friends the French had they been faced by a similar situation. Be that as it may, permission was given to the French to send an officer to London to examine our figures, and presumably to advise as to how more men could be obtained.

A certain Colonel Roure arrived and was given every facility to inspect all the figures. The two main points urged by the French authorities, apart from Ireland which was a purely political matter, were the number of men shown as belonging to the Army in the British Isles, and the number employed in civil life. The first point was the one with which the Army was most concerned, and it may be interesting to demonstrate the why and the wherefore of the 1,248,000 men shown on the books of the Army as serving at home at the time :—

Complete units preparing for overseas	... ..	20,000
*In hospitals and command depots	... ..	325,000
Home service combatant troops, including Ireland and defended ports, anti-aircraft defence, and guards for prisoners of war	... ..	137,000
Labour and non-combatant home service units—of which 243,000 were low physical categories, and included 30,000 skilled artificers, 14,000 dock labour, 62,000 employed on agriculture, 11,000 on aerodrome work, and 46,000 on regimental and garrison fatigue work, in order to free the men under training to devote all their time to training, and thus lessen the period by which they could be sent abroad	... ..	260,000
Draft-finding units who join the armies abroad as soon as trained	... ..	405,000
Administration services, of whom cadets and officers' training corps numbered 22,000 (potential officers), the remainder being men at schools of instruction who go abroad when trained	... ..	67,000
At depots: A constant turnover from day to day of recruits arriving to be clothed and equipped before despatch to training centres	... ..	34,000
		<u>1,248,000</u>

* See page 225.

It was pointed out to the French representative that if the British Army in France was operating under the same conditions as the French very large savings could be made, because with us it was necessary to some extent to duplicate the services administering the Army, to say nothing of home defence, a service which in France was automatically carried out by the armies in the field. A further point was that in France many French wounded attended by civilian doctors were not shown on the strength of the Army, and many were at their own homes instead of being in hospitals and command depots as under the British system, which while entailing a corresponding increase of personnel decreased the period by which men could again become available to fight.

Colonel Roure brought over certain figures referring to French man-power, but from discreet inquiries I had caused to be made at the French War Office, who, by the way, were always unwilling to put their figures on the table, I had grave doubts as to their accuracy, and he was quite unable to account categorically for the 1,900,000 men shown as employed by the French behind the Army zone. I explained to him that as regards the number of fit men in civil life, while the matter was entirely one for the politicians, he must bear in mind that the number of Frenchmen employed in the French Navy and Mercantile Marine were very small in comparison to ours, and that a very large number of men in the United Kingdom were working in mines, on ship-building and on other industries for the Allied cause generally, also that we were staffing and constructing a very large portion of the French railway system, so that taking it all round the British effort was certainly not less than that of France. Incidentally I had ascertained that the time taken to train the French recruits was from one to two months in excess of the time taken to train our men.

We parted the best of friends, but the poor Colonel was sent back to London again a few weeks later, and explained to me

that he was in a very difficult position, because while he realized that he had all the facts connected with our Army in his possession Monsieur Clemenceau had insisted on his returning to investigate matters in which he (Roure) was satisfied, owing to national characteristics, that nothing further could be done. I could not help chuckling at a brother soldier being worried by his politicians, not being an entire stranger to the experience myself.

I heard incidentally that the French had proposed a similar investigation of the American and Italian figures which was politely declined by those nations. Certainly at that time our Prime Minister was as much in love with everything French as he seems out of love with it now.

The month of July was the last month during my tenure of office as Adjutant-General in which a reasonable number of men was produced for the Army ; in August and until the end of the war the figures were insignificant.

If I have in the foregoing pages cavilled at the erratic and ill-sustained attempts to procure men made by the Government throughout the war it must not be imagined that I yield to anyone in my admiration of the national effort which produced close on 5,000,000 men in spite of a policy never consistent, and influenced from day to day by the ebb and flow of our operations in the field. Allowing that the voluntary effort was, if not exhausted, at all events on its last legs by the end of 1915, which is evident from the official figures, the contention of the military members of the Army Council was that nothing short of a consistent policy by which every man and woman would do a full day's work was sufficient to win the war. Sir William Robertson on becoming C.I.G.S. had laid down this maxim and wisely refused to be drawn into giving an opinion as to how many men were required.

What we asked was that every man who could be spared over and above those required for essential industries, and for the Navy, should be given to the Army. Had this been done, and

had our forces not been dissipated on "side shows" in all parts of the globe, the decision in the decisive theatre of war would assuredly have been reached earlier. Now that the war is won, so far as naval and military operations are concerned, people may exclaim: "What does it all matter? The war is over, and that is enough." True, but there is no guarantee that the last war has been fought, or that our country may never find itself again called upon to fight for existence.

Should that day ever come it is to be hoped that those who control the destinies of our land will profit by the experience of our generation, and in the first few months of the crisis, during which the patriotic fervour of our race can be depended on to produce many hundreds of thousands of willing recruits, so organize and direct the resources of our country that a continuous and ever-increasing effort will compel victory without the loss of wasted months and years. Nor for a moment do I believe in the argument which I heard so often put forward that compulsion of any kind would cause disaffection and consequent unrest. If the safety of the country is at stake, and if the nation is taken into the confidence of its rulers and told the naked truth, when that truth can be told without affecting the military operations—a course often systematically avoided in the late war both in Parliament and in the press—my belief, based on an experience at a time when the public were often confused and irritated by constant sudden shifts and changes of policy, is that the man-power and woman-power of Great Britain would cheerfully strain every nerve for the triumph of their Motherland.

In the month of August, 1918, I suddenly found myself famous in the press as a man who was said to have flouted the House of Commons, having "shown the door" to a Select Committee of the House, and who on the other hand for so doing was described as being "as incapable of learning as the Bourbons." The whole story was so distorted and one-sided as to be amusing, so far as I

personally was concerned, had not the credit of the whole Army Council been called in question and held up to public abuse on account of certain action which in the interests of the Army I felt bound to take. It is now ancient history, but as an example of sharp practice on the part of a Parliamentary Committee, and the consequent hoodwinking of the public, a few words on the subject may not be out of place.

When the War Office came under the review of the Select Committee on National Expenditure, of which Mr. H. Samuel* was chairman, a committee of experts was appointed by the Army Council to institute inquiries into the staffing of the various departments, and to make recommendations to the Council. To the surprise of the military members of Council the work of this Committee was delegated to a Sub-Committee of junior officials who possessed neither the experience nor capacity necessary for the task. To this I took exception, especially after I had digested the Sub-Committee's criticisms on the working of the department for which I was responsible. In due course the Army Council submitted a report to the Select Committee, but when the 8th Report of that Committee was made public it was found that it was not based on the official report of the Army Council, but on certain personal and secret papers between members of the Army Council in which we were in the habit of expressing freely and unreservedly our views on matters under discussion, in the same way as we should have done if sitting round the Council table. When a search was made for these papers they were found lying about in the house of one of the members of Mr. Samuel's Select Committee, a fact that may help to explain the leakage in official matters so often commented on from time to time.

As the Select Committee thought fit to express strong disapproval of the action of the Army Council on my representations,

* The Rt. Hon. Sir Herbert Louis Samuel, G.B.E. High Commissioner, Palestine, since 1920.

I urged that the facts should be explained in Parliament, but without avail, the politicians having nothing to fear knowing that the mouths of the soldiers were sealed, and that an exposure would disclose the somewhat slippery methods of the Select Committee, and possibly have detracted from the value of their report.

CHAPTER XII.

ON Friday, 30th August, 1918, London was startled by the news that the Metropolitan Police had refused duty and had gone on strike. So far as I am aware, no suspicion existed at New Scotland Yard that such a crisis was imminent, indeed some little time later I learnt that the superintendents at their weekly meeting on 28th August had reported that all was well with the force. As there was a possibility that troops might be required to preserve order, I directed General Childs to get into touch with the Yard and with the London District from which any troops required would be drawn. A detachment of Guards was sent to Scotland Yard, but no further troops were requisitioned.

Both Childs and I were more than sorry that our old friends with whom we had been associated on several occasions during labour troubles before the war should have, even for a moment, lost the confidence of the public, and endangered the common weal at such a time. We knew nothing of the origin of the trouble nor were we concerned except to provide any troops who might be required. I also took the precaution of looking up the numbers and whereabouts of Metropolitan Police who had enlisted in the Army, so that if necessary they could be recalled for duty in London whilst retaining their status as soldiers. From inquiries we learned later that questions of pay and of recognition of the Police Union were involved, the latter being a serious matter because it might react on the Army.

I communicated my fears to Lord Milner on the morning of Saturday, 31st August, pointing out that the Metropolitans being an organized force directly under the Government any concession

made to them in the direction of union recognition would be more than a stepping-stone towards a similar state of affairs in the Army, an opportunity which would not be neglected by those who were already making insidious efforts to undermine the discipline of the troops. Having unburdened my mind to the Secretary of State, I returned to my ordinary work and put the strike on one side. At 3-30 p.m. the same day Lord Milner sent for me and told me that the Prime Minister wished me to take over the Commissionership of Police. Without hesitation I told him that I could not entertain the proposal. I had attained a position in the Army which had been the height of my ambition, was egotistical enough to think that I knew the work from A to Z, and wished to complete my time as Adjutant-General, and then to retire into private life. We talked for about half an hour, and I reminded Lord Milner that in 1914 Mr. McKenna had told me that if the war had not supervened I was to have been offered the appointment of Commissioner when Sir Edward Henry's time was up, an offer I should under those circumstances have accepted gladly. The intervening four years had, however, entirely changed the situation so far as I was concerned, and I had no desire to start a new venture.

Lord Milner went off to Downing Street, and about 5 p.m. I was summoned there by telephone. In the Cabinet room were the Prime Minister, Lord Milner, Sir G. Cave* (the Home Secretary), and a few more Cabinet Ministers. I took a chair opposite Mr. Lloyd George and then the fun began. For close on two hours I resisted the pressure to take up the Commissionership. I suggested other men, younger and equally fit for the post, General Horwood or General Childs, to which the Prime Minister replied that it was necessary to have someone in whom the public would have confidence. The obvious retort on my

* The Rt. Hon. Viscount Cave, P.C., G.C.M.G. Home Secretary, 1916-1919. Lord Chancellor, 1922.

part was that after the Samuel Committee affair, of which the true facts had never been explained, I doubted if anyone would have confidence in my management of affairs, and certainly the police, having digested all the nonsense that had appeared in the press, would at once jump to the conclusion that I had been selected in order to dragoon them into submission. At last the Prime Minister expressed the opinion that it was of national importance that I should take the post. I asked him if he really meant that, and had not said it as an extra little bit of gratifying whitewash. He said he did, on which of course I had nothing further to say, except that I would do my best to see the business through. The assent of the King was obtained through the telephone, and I left Downing Street in a very sad frame of mind about 7 p.m.

The prospect was not a pleasant one. Quite apart from the desire to remain among my many good friends at the War Office at work directly bearing on the war, I had visions of being able at the end of the war to assist in the reorganization of the Army so as to ensure in case of need an indefinite expansion on well-defined lines, and thus minimize the danger of a repetition of the last four years of chaos. Of course the visions would not have materialized, prejudice and the comforting illusion that everlasting and universal peace had been secured being factors too powerful for any drastic Army reforms. During the night I went carefully over all the pros and cons of the position which had been forced upon me, and the following day wrote to Mr. Lloyd George reiterating the arguments I had used against acceptance, asking him again to give the matter his consideration. Nothing, however, came of it.

On Sunday, 1st September, I went to Scotland Yard with Sir George Cave and saw Sir Edward Henry,* arranging to take

* Sir Edward R. Henry, Bt., G.C.V.O., K.C.B. Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, 1903-1918.

over on the following Wednesday. The whole atmosphere of the Yard struck me as being lugubrious in the extreme, an impression which was confirmed later on, very different from the cheery optimism we managed to maintain in the War Office, however dark the war clouds looked.

On Tuesday, 3rd September, I took my official farewell of the members of my Staff, and think I may say without egotism that they felt the parting as much as I did. Some of them had been with me since the commencement of the war in France, and had shared with me at the War Office two-and-a-half years of the most strenuous and exacting work, often in the face of outside criticism as uninstructed as it was undeserved. During my time as Adjutant-General nothing could exceed the loyal and untiring support I received from the whole of my Staff, from the lowest to the highest. Sad, too, was I to sever my official connection with my colleagues on the Army Council. It is impossible to imagine any body of men who worked more harmoniously through the troublous times of the war with one ideal only before them, the well-being of the Army, in this the greatest struggle of its existence. With the Quartermaster-General, Jack Cowans, my intercourse had of necessity been daily, sometimes hourly, when urgent questions of administration required settlement. Apart from being the greatest Quartermaster-General ever borne on the records of our Army, he possessed a personal charm and boyish cheeriness that made light of difficulties, however great, and did much to counteract the atmosphere of gloom which on occasions was apt to settle like a pall on other parts of Whitehall. When everything looked dark and faces lengthened, Jack Cowans would suddenly weigh in with some absurd story, which had the effect of raising the spirits of everybody round the table. A few days after leaving the War Office, in reply to a note of his, I wrote to him from Scotland Yard : " You cannot miss me more than I miss all you people, and especially our daily military members'

meetings, for there is no one here to tell me the somewhat lurid stories that you produced daily which made life worth living in the old place."

He was a great administrator whose contribution towards the success of our arms has never been adequately recognized by the public, and a friend whose early death left a blank that can never be filled. On Wednesday, 4th September, 1918, I installed myself at Scotland Yard. The building, with its long dark passages could never exude cheerfulness, and at this particular time a settled atmosphere of nervousness and gloom seemed to have invested the place. Everybody was quite polite, but evidently not enthusiastic at the advent of a soldier, who, from the newspapers of a couple of weeks before, might justly be imagined to combine the disrespect of constitutional methods of a Colonel Pride with the flabby incapacity of a Bourbon. Also the reign of General who had been appointed Commissioner in days gone by, but within the memory of men still serving, was not remembered with enthusiasm at the Yard.

The first hour in my new office, one of the few pleasant rooms in the building, was not without its humorous side. I was walking up and down the room talking to Sir Frederick Wodehouse* and Sir Basil Thomson,† the two senior Assistant Commissioners, when the door was suddenly flung open, and an excited individual rushed in asking if he could speak to me. He rather incoherently poured out a story about the men again going out on strike, that they were collecting at the stations, and it was being spread about that in coming up in the lift I had turned out an inspector, to whom I had said that "I was not going in a lift with any — bobby." I asked the young man where he had got the yarn from. He was not quite sure. I then told him that he might possibly like to hear

* Major Sir Edwin Frederick Wodehouse, K.C.B., K.C.V.O. Assistant-Commissioner, City of London Police, 1890-1902. Assistant-Commissioner, Metropolitan Police, 1902-1918.

† Sir Basil Home Thomson, K.C.B. Assistant-Commissioner, Metropolitan Police, 1913-1919. Director, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 1919-1921.

my real experience of the Yard lift. On the previous Sunday and Tuesday, when I had come to the office to see the late Commissioner, the lift was not working. On this particular day I did come up in it, and had a most interesting conversation with the liftman on the subject of defective packing, which apparently accounted for the machine being out of order on the previous days. The young man then left, and I continued my conversation with the Assistant Commissioners. Within half an hour the door again burst open, and another breathless and very excited individual appeared, who blurted out that the Admiralty had telephoned to ask for Metropolitan Police to quell a mutiny in the Naval Barracks at Portsmouth. I made him say it all over again, and then asked who was in the barracks. He presumed bluejackets or marines.

I agreed, and suggested they might be armed, and finally told him to telephone back to his friend at the Admiralty to say that if he would kindly mind his own business the Commissioner would mind his, and that he had better go and find some armed men to quell any mutinies he might have on hand. When this excited individual had gone—he was a Chief Constable—I asked Wodehouse and Thomson if there were many more people in the Yard like the two we had just seen, for if so I was not surprised that there had been a strike. The excuse was that the strike and the departure of the late Commissioner had upset their nerves. Still it made one think, and I at once had a notice put up to stop people bursting into my room without knocking. It may be well here to go back a few days and explain briefly the terms on which the strike was settled by the Prime Minister. It was engineered and ordered by the National Union of Police and Prison Officers (N.U.P.P.O.) an organization which had been banned by the authorities, and of which Mr. C. Duncan, M.P. for Barrow-in-Furness and Secretary of the Workers' Union, was president, a Metropolitan constable called Marston vice-

president, and another constable secretary, while a Mr. Carmichael, the secretary of the London Trades Council, threw himself energetically into the dispute on the side of the union. Meetings, more or less orderly, except for assaults on special constables who in the crisis rendered invaluable assistance, were held at Tower Hill, and Whitehall was invaded by numbers of police in plain clothes augmented by the riff-raff who are always in evidence on such occasions. The demands put forward by the union are indicated by the concessions made by the Prime Minister and accepted by the men, which were as follows : —

Increases of pensionable pay by 13s. a week to all ranks, making the minimum pensionable wage 43s.

War bonus of 12s. a week.

War bonus grant of 2s. 6d. a week for each child of school age.

Pension of 10s. a week to widows.

£12 per annum for each child of school-going age now given to the Orphanage to be continued.

Right to a pension of £1 15s. 4d. a week at the end of twenty-six years' service.

Police-constable Thiel to be reinstated. (He had been dismissed from the force for belonging to the union.)

An authorized organization to represent the men to be established.

Under the above terms of settlement there were two weak points which were the cause of much trouble, and, indirectly, of the second strike which took place in August, 1919. The first was the omission to publish in the official *communiqué* of the settlement that the Prime Minister had met the delegates as policemen and not as members of the union ; and the second the statement of the Prime Minister at his interview with the men that " he could not in war time sanction the recognition of a Police Union." It is true that the first point was cleared up by Sir George Cave at interviews with the press, but this did not give it the force that would have resulted by inclusion in the official *communiqué*, and up to the time the Police Union was broken in August, 1919, a strong point was made of the fact that by receiving policemen

who formed the executive of the union the Prime Minister had tacitly acknowledged the organization. The Prime Minister's temporizing phraseology about not sanctioning a union in war time was naturally seized upon by the men as an excuse to demand recognition of the union when peace came.

The men who were due to be on duty were back at their work on the evening of the day on which the settlement was made, and the public had reason to hope that this first withdrawal from duty of the Metropolitan Police on a large scale would be the last. I had, however, not been in Scotland Yard many days before I saw clearly that the ulcer had only been poulticed, and that nothing but a free incision would cure the malady.

And now what were the reasons for this upheaval in a body of men who for so many years had been the admiration of our great metropolis, and of the world? I could hardly expect to achieve any success in the position I had taken up unless I could find out and remedy the causes of the trouble, and to this I devoted every possible moment of my first weeks at the Yard. It is not either an easy or a pleasant theme to write about, but the machine which to outward appearance seemed so spick-and-span was in reality rusted and in many respects out of date, a possibility that may overtake any concern, public or private, which is not kept abreast of the times.

The main factor which influenced this hitherto loyal body of men to take the law into their own hands was the want of touch between the authorities at Scotland Yard and the main body of the force. The Commissioner was dependent for his information on the reports of his superintendents, men of unblemished character who had been promoted mainly for length of service and good conduct, but who in many instances were not capable of commanding and handling divisions which in some cases numbered 1,500 men. Reports too were often coloured in order to give the impression that all was well in the various divisions. I have

already mentioned that two days before the strike the superintendents reported that there was no cause for uneasiness, which of itself proved the want of touch between the men and the higher officials. During the years 1909-1914, owing to the force having been allowed to drop considerably in numbers for reasons of economy, a recruiting campaign throughout the principal towns in England was carried out, and between 2,000 and 3,000 men were enrolled. Many of these men were deeply imbued with trade union ideas which they did not fail to propagate after they became members of the force, and thus became in course of time the leaders of the Police Union. The want of touch between the officials at Scotland Yard and the bulk of the force, together with injudicious handling of the men in certain divisions, gave the opportunity for an insidious campaign in the direction of the formation of a union in order to compel attention to the grievances, real and fanciful, of the lower ranks of the force.

There is no gainsaying the fact that real grievances did exist. As soon as the existence of the union became known to the authorities orders were issued to curb the evil, but the consequent disciplinary measures were based on no settled policy. Although it was laid down that membership of the union would entail dismissal from the force, lighter punishments were inflicted in some cases, and in others no punishment at all. Whilst it goes without saying that a union such as was proposed could not for a moment be tolerated in any organized and disciplined body of Government servants, it is doubtful whether when in 1913 the union first appeared above the surface, sufficient care was taken by the authorities at the Home Office, and at Scotland Yard, responsible for the Metropolitan Police, to investigate and probe the causes of discontent which had created and kept alive what can only be described as a spirit of insubordination. From inquiries I am satisfied that had the Commissioner secured first-hand information of the real causes of unrest during the year 1913, steps could have

been taken to have cut the ground away from under the feet of those who were propagating the doctrine of a union to a great extent for their personal ends and ambition. Drastic disciplinary action only achieves its object when the bulk of the community to which a culprit belongs acquiesces in the justice of the award. When such is not the case punishment creates martyrs.

In 1918, when high wages were ruling throughout the country and labour unrest was rampant, those who pulled the union strings were not slow to raise the attractive cry that the men by asserting themselves through the union would secure the increases of pay which had too long been delayed. There is no doubt that hundreds of the police joined the union for this reason alone, and equally that increases of pay were long overdue. During my inquiries I came across cases of men with families who before the pay was increased were in a pitiable condition. Here was another chance to scotch the snake. It is true that the Commissioner at the moment of the strike was working out a scheme of higher pay and pensions, but the tortoiselike movements and antediluvian methods of the Home Office department responsible for the financial arrangements of the Metropolitan Police—of which more anon—were doubtless not only well known to the men, but were magnified by their leaders. In view of the fact that the rates of pay were known to be in need of revision an immediate substantial temporary increase pending the elaboration of a permanent scheme would certainly have thinned the ranks of the union. It was a case where in my opinion the Commissioner would have been justified in metaphorically holding a pistol to the head or tail of the Home Office. Having briefly sketched the causes which prepared the ground for the union, and enabled that organization to influence the greater part of the force up to the pitch of exhibiting themselves as strikers in the streets of the city where hitherto they had been respected and beloved, I will return to the task that lay before me at the Yard.

The question of pay having been settled for the moment, and Constable Thiel, the organizing secretary of the union, reinstated under the Prime Minister's settlement, there still remained the setting up of machinery under which members of the force could bring forward any grievances, real or imaginary, as to their conditions of service, subject to the proviso that there would be no power to interfere with the discipline of the force. I waited for two days, thinking that after the volume of oratory in the streets and in the Council Chamber at Downing Street the men's leaders would waste no time in putting forward their schemes for an organization such as had been sketched out by Mr. Lloyd George. It also took me two days to secure a shorthand typist, such luxuries being apparently at a discount at the Yard. Once again fortune favoured me, for the somewhat timid young lady who found her way to my room was not only an expert at her work, but later displayed a degree of capacity in handling the details of my personal office that fully justified her selection by my successor to be his private secretary. On 6th September I sketched out a scheme under which representatives, elected by ballot, from each division would form a Board to discuss all matters affecting the well-being of the force, and bring them to my notice. At the same time I called a meeting of men, one man from each of the twenty-six divisions, at Scotland Yard on 7th September, in order to explain the scheme to them, and incidentally to make their acquaintance. This action on my part, four days after I had taken over, brought about the first skirmish with Police-constable James Marston, the figure-head of the union.

All through the troubled ten months that followed it was a constantly increasing wonder to me how or why an intelligent body of men like the Metropolitans could have allowed themselves to be led by the nose by this man. He was a good officer at his duty, but I doubt if he would ever have risen above the rank of sergeant. Heavy, stupid, with no gift of argument, he would seize on certain

set phrases which he would repeat over and over again with that peculiar sawing motion of the arm so prevalent among demagogues at street corners and in Trafalgar Square. Behind him were men gifted with varying degrees of brain power, notably J. H. Hayes, now member of Parliament for the Edge Hill Division of Liverpool, to whom I shall have occasion to refer later on. Marston when in my presence invariably adopted a hectoring bullying manner, calculated to disturb the temper of the most placid. It did not, however, require many interviews with him to see that my game was at all costs to remain unruffled until through sheer desperation he and his executive should make a false step and deliver themselves into my hand. In the meantime as the man had not a spark of humour I derived constant amusement at our interviews by "pulling his leg" before his brother deputationists and turning the laugh on him, which had the effect of shaking their faith in him as their chosen leader. To have suspended him from duty and taken disciplinary action, which his conduct towards me on many occasions more than fully justified, would only have caused an explosion before the time was ripe, and therefore the only alternative was to swallow my natural inclinations and bide my time. This self-restraint, and it was considerable, was fully rewarded in August, 1919.

But to return to the first passage of arms. No sooner had I called the meeting on 7th September than Marston and his executive began to make trouble and to work the press, principally *The Daily Herald*, on the ground that the men had been *ordered* to attend, and that two of the men who attended did not belong to the union. Police-constable Marston viewed my action with grave concern (he was most amusing when "gravely concerned") and it was hinted that the men would come out again on strike. However, I told the meeting that I had called them together to make their acquaintance, and to put before them a skeleton scheme I

had drawn up, as we could not let day after day slip by without getting down to work on the subject of their representation.

After some more talk, on lines similar to what I would have used towards my own men in the Army, I left them to discuss the scheme, and on my return they were good enough to receive me with a cheer. I then knew that Marston and his friends had not had it all their own way. Finally, it was agreed that they should take the scheme away, think out any amendments they wished, and that I would arrange for a deputation to see the Home Secretary to settle the business. It was necessary that Sir George Cave should finally approve any decision which might be arrived at, and indeed at that time the effect of the interview with the Prime Minister on 31st August had so swollen the heads of Marston and his executive that they seemed to think that anyone of less than Cabinet rank was beneath their notice. On the 12th September the Home Secretary met a deputation, and the rules for the Representative Board were finally approved, the Board to be at once elected by secret ballot and to remain in being until 31st March, 1919, when a new Board would be chosen. The election was carried out on 16th September and resulted in a representation of one inspector, five sergeants, and twenty-six constables, all the members of the executive of the union being elected. Though the ballot may have been secret I had clear evidence that pressure both direct and indirect was brought to bear to secure the return of men belonging to the union, Police-constable Thiel, the man who had lately been reinstated, being particularly active. During the time of the Board election I received many complaints from police authorities throughout the country that men of the Metropolitan Police had been touring round trying to create trouble in various localities. An order was therefore published forbidding such conduct. These incidents all pointed to the fact that in spite of what had passed between the Prime Minister and the strikers' deputation on 31st August, Marston and his friends had no intention of relinquishing

the campaign to obtain recognition of their union, together with the resulting claim to interfere in the discipline and organization of the force. As if to emphasize this fact, when the executive committee of the Representative Board came to be elected, the whole of the members of the committee were made *ex-officio* members of the executive committee of the union, thus ensuring the domination of the union over the force.

I will turn for a moment to other matters, many of which had a bearing on the ultimate reassertion of authority some ten months later. An organization had existed at Scotland Yard for many years which, if properly directed, would have supplied the link required between the headquarters of the force and the men. I refer to the Chief Constables, of whom there were three at the time I took over. The functions of these officers were very nebulous, consisting, so far as I could ascertain, in sitting at Scotland Yard and dabbling with unimportant papers with occasional visits to convenient police stations. So far as their utility to the force was concerned they might have been non-existent. One of my first acts was to divide the metropolis into four districts, placing a Chief Constable in charge of each district, where he would reside, have his office, and be responsible to the Commissioner for everything in the divisions of his area. The Chief Constables were thus able to get into close touch with the men, and to advise the Commissioner on the merits and demerits of the higher ranks as they came forward for promotion.

Another departure from precedent during my first month at Scotland Yard was the promotion of a superintendent to the position of Chief Constable. Hitherto these posts had been filled from outside the force, generally from the Army, and selections had apparently been tempered more by favouritism than by efficiency. In one case an unsuitable officer had been forced on the Commissioner by a Cabinet Minister for purely personal reasons. During my first month at the Yard I received many

requests from persons in high positions to find billets for their protégés. My replies, I am afraid, were always unsatisfactory to the applicants. The position of Chief Constable under the system I inaugurated was an important one, responsibility extending over some five thousand men scattered throughout a wide area, but I was convinced that men who had risen from the ranks of the force could be found who would be equal to the position. Happily, for a first venture, a man was clearly indicated, Mr. (now Sir) W. J. Olive, the senior superintendent in the force, and a man of outstanding ability, who has since risen to the position of Assistant Commissioner and deputy to the Commissioner. To Mr. Olive I owe a debt of gratitude for guiding my footsteps over the many pitfalls I encountered during my first year at the Yard. I waited for six months before making another promotion and finally selected Mr. H. D. Morgan, who happened to be the junior and, I think, the youngest superintendent of the force, and I had no cause to regret the choice. My successor has continued the same policy, and I see no reason why the post of Chief Constable should not always be filled within the force. For the higher appointments, especially that of Commissioner, experience is desirable wider than can be obtained by a lifetime in London, and I doubt whether, saving in exceptional cases, promotion above the rank of Chief Constable should be looked upon as a monopoly of the force. I have referred already to the department responsible for the financial interests of the Metropolitan Police. The arrangement is a curious one. Instead of making the Commissioner financially accountable with an expert to advise him—a procedure which would seem reasonable and logical when it is considered that the force amounts to over 20,000 men for whose upkeep, clothing, equipment, etc., the Commissioner has to accept responsibility—a financial department is established in Scotland Yard owing allegiance only to the Home Office, under an official called the Receiver. The civil servant who held this

appointment on my arrival at Scotland Yard informed me at our first meeting that he was my colleague and not my subordinate. I told him I was sorry it was so, because had he been my subordinate I should have been more considerate in my dealings with him. This gentleman had been many years in the post, and soon afterwards was replaced by an old friend of mine, Mr. J. F. Moylan, C.B., C.B.E., who had been with me in the South Wales coal strike.

The result of this curious financial arrangement is that the Commissioner writes a letter on some financial point to the Home Office, the Home Office sends it back to the Receiver at Scotland Yard, who returns it to the Home Office, whence eventually (very often very eventually) it comes back to the Commissioner. Economy and rapidity might, I think, be secured by a more simple procedure. Prior to 3rd September, 1918, I, like the ordinary man in the street, thought that our London police were more or less up to date in their methods, so it was rather a shock to find that the superintendents, many of whom had large areas to control over which they were supposed to maintain constant supervision, were only provided with traps and horses. Many were the jokes I heard about these Victorian vehicles. If a superintendent intended to visit one of his stations, the groom or someone else would pass the word by telephone, and, of course, by the time the horse had been harnessed and had solemnly trotted over the intervening distance everything was spick-and-span at the station on the great man's arrival.

Apart from this it was quite impossible for superintendents to exercise the supervision that was necessary with such means of locomotion. Motor cars were sanctioned for Chief Constables and superintendents, an innovation that went a long way towards increased efficiency. The mention of horses leads up to the mounted branch of the Metropolitan Police. I can only say I was shocked at what I found in the stables, and the majority of the

men from age and figure were quite unsuited for mounted work. Possibly the war was the cause of the state into which this branch had fallen.

I was lucky enough to secure the services of Lieut.-Colonel Percy Laurie, C.B.E., D.S.O., late of the Royal Scots Greys, whom I had known as a Provost-Marshal in France, the outward and visible signs of whose work are apparent every day in the main thoroughfares of London. Not only has he been instrumental in raising the mounted branch to a position of second to none in the police forces of the world, but by his interest in the sports of the men he has fostered a spirit of comradeship throughout the whole force which was unknown in former years, when divisions inclined to be water-tight compartments. Formerly the mounted men, as well as the superintendents, carried swords, a custom I abolished, not from any desire to refute the suggestion that I should introduce military methods into the police, but simply because for mounted men a long baton is a far more efficient corrective for a mob; and for superintendents, as well as for other higher police officials, I consider a sword is out of place. A man who suddenly assumes a sword in middle age, and has not been accustomed to carrying it in his youth, never looks quite at ease, and may fall over it at a critical moment. In any case it is not a weapon for an English policeman. I understand, however, that my successor has different views.

Swords lead up automatically to uniform. The uniforms of the Metropolitan Police officials in 1918 were rather wonderful. The Commissioner and Assistant Commissioners wore on State occasions a gorgeous costume approximating to that of an Ambassador, covered all down the front with silver embroidery, and costing a small fortune. The Chief Constables and superintendents were dressed in a uniform almost identical to that of the Rifle Brigade, but neither that nor the silver-embroidered tunic of the higher ranks had any relation

to the uniform of the men. After all, in the Army a Field-Marshal's tunic is, I should say was, the same cut and colour as that of the private soldier. I had discussed the question of the more general wearing of uniform with my predecessor, but gathered that in his opinion any attempt to wear it would be taken by the men as a sign of militarism.

However, after a little time at the Yard I came to the conclusion that when on duty it would be a good thing for officers of whatever rank to wear uniform much of the same pattern as that of the men. For undress a plain serge kit was invented, on the lines of a constable's serge coat, and the innovation was I think welcomed by the men as bridging the gulf between themselves and the higher ranks. For full dress a coat modelled on that of a constable's tunic, with a reasonable amount of silver lace to denote the various grades, was approved by the Home Office, but not until I had severed my connection with the police.

In my personal office I found it necessary to carry out certain changes. The private secretary of the late Commissioner, a senior civil servant who had been there for many years, was moved on to a more independent post, and was eventually replaced by a demobilized officer.

One great asset in the office at the Yard was the secretary, Mr. W. H. Kendall, C.B.E., a veritable walking encyclopædia of all things pertaining to the police, and if at times in the early days I hustled him out of his methodical stride I think he bears me in grateful remembrance for having brushed away some of the dust of ages that was clogging the wheels of the office. The two following anecdotes are typical of the pre-Victorian methods then still in force.

Soon after arriving at the Yard, I found one day among the papers on my table a very official letter to the Home Secretary in which I had the honour to ask that he would sanction the promotion of various sergeants and constables whose names were

on an attached list. I read it over twice, and then rang for my friend Kendall to ask him what it all meant. He assured me that it was quite in order, and that all promotions including those of constables to sergeants were sanctioned by the Home Secretary. "But," I objected, "the H.S. does not know anything about the men, and if I, by a stroke of the pen, have power to dismiss a man up to rank of inspector, surely I can promote a constable without bothering the Secretary of State?" Kendall stuck to it that from time immemorial all promotions were approved by the Home Secretary. Driven into a corner I asked for the original authority, and Kendall went off to find it. Two days later I reminded him of the letter, and he told me that he thought the authority was the Police Act of 1829. The Act was produced, and there sure enough was a terrifying announcement that the Commissioner might, with the approval of His Majesty's Secretary of State, promote men and do all sorts of other things. I then rang up the private secretary to the Secretary of State, and asked him if he was ever bothered with lists of policemen to be promoted. He told me he had never heard of such a thing. An inquiry from the Under-Secretary produced the same reply. Kendall then agreed with me that for nearly a century promotions in the Metropolitans had probably been approved by some lower division clerk, who signed much in the same supercilious way as a shopwalker signs your bill when you buy a pair of socks. I thereupon wrote to the Home Office saying that I did not propose to refer any promotions or similar details affecting ranks below that of superintendent, a proposal which received approval, and no doubt enabled some department in the Home Office to economize a clerk.

The other story was if anything more absurd. A police constable went on leave to Ilfracombe, where his father had a farm. Driving sheep one afternoon, my policeman broke the leg of a lamb with his stick and left the poor little animal to die in the field.

A woman reported the case to the local police, and the constable was fined by the magistrate for cruelty. In due course the case found its way on to my table, with a record of the magistrate's award. I scribbled a note on it instructing the Chief Constable of the man's district to see the man, and tell him that if he could not behave more humanely to dumb animals I would not let him go to his father's farm again. Kendall, ever on the watch to save me from falling into hidden pitfalls, presently came along with the file and asked if I intended to keep the man in the force. "Good Lord!" I said, "why not? The man has a good record, and has been punished for what he did." "Then," said my guide, philosopher, and friend, "the authority of the Secretary of State must be obtained." "But," I argued, "I can dismiss the man if I like." To this Kendall agreed, but maintained that I could not keep him without sanction. So once more I asked for the authority, which Kendall had evidently all ready in his office, for he returned at once with a file of papers about a quarter of an inch thick, bound in strong brown paper of a quality superior to what is seen nowadays. A letter was turned up yellow with age, written in a beautiful copperplate hand, and couched in the reddest of red-tape phraseology to the effect that the writer was directed by the Right Honourable the Earl of —, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Home Affairs, to inform the Commissioner that in the event of a member of the Metropolitan Police being convicted by the civil power, the question of his retention would be referred to the Right Honourable the Secretary for Home Affairs, and so on. The date of this really beautiful specimen of handwriting was October, 1832.

On inquiry at the Home Office I found that its oldest inhabitant was unaware of the existence of the letter, and nobody wanted to have anything to do with it. So the constable remained in the force, and I hope since those days has enjoyed his leave at his father's farm without injuring any more animals.

I give these two anecdotes as examples of what may no doubt still be found in Government departments where the office routine is not overhauled from time to time in order to suppress procedure which has outgrown its usefulness. Doubtless in 1829 the Head of the London Police did not enjoy the confidence of his superiors to the extent of being trusted to carry out promotions among the men for whom he was responsible, but that the practice should have been allowed to continue struck me as being little less than an insult to the many distinguished men who had held the office of Commissioner.

The day after my meeting with the representatives from divisions, I received a resolution on behalf of the whole force calling attention to assaults which had been made on the Special Constabulary during the police strike. The resolution, which showed the right spirit and which I was glad to be able to send to Sir Edward Ward, wound up with the following words :—

“In view of the confidence and loyalty felt by the Regular force towards the Special Constabulary, it is evident that such occurrences were merely the outcome of excitement on the part of a few. The members of the Regular Force, while deeply regretting the incidents referred to, desire to assure the Special Constabulary of their appreciation of the past services of the specials, and of their confidence that the cordial relations between the two forces will increase as time goes on.”

Before I had been at Scotland Yard a week, rumour was busy that the London Fire Brigade would shortly come out on strike. When considering protective measures that would be necessary, fears were expressed that the police might prove a broken reed if called upon to counteract a strike so soon after their own outbreak. I strongly combated this idea, pointing out that an opportunity had now presented itself to prove whether, after the concessions that had been made, the men intended to carry out their duty. Finally it was arranged that police would be detailed

for the usual protective work, while in case of any failure troops would be ready at short notice to take up the task. Happily the strike of the Fire Brigade was averted.

The interview on 12th September with Sir George Cave, already referred to, was a weary business, lasting for over four hours, mainly on account of the difficulty of Marston and his friends in expressing their ideas clearly, and in understanding the meaning of plain English. In the end a scheme was agreed to very much on the lines I had suggested, and the Home Secretary consented to the request of the deputation that a police order banning the union should be withdrawn, and that I should favourably consider the reinstatement of men who had been dismissed from the force for belonging to the union, two concessions which did not make my position easier.

I have already alluded to the want of touch between the higher officials at the Yard and the main body of the men, a difficulty which I found by experience to be very real. During my early days at the Yard I visited as many stations as possible, but unless such visits were timed to hit off the hour at which reliefs were parading, the number of men who could be seen was negligible. In a few divisions where there were still signs of unrest I managed by arrangement to see a fair number of men, in order to hear their complaints and to take the necessary steps to put things right. It has to be remembered that a police officer is on duty for eight hours out of the twenty-four, and during the remaining sixteen his time is his own to do pretty well what he pleases ; he is, therefore, not available unless specially warned, in which case any attendance counts as a duty and has to be made up to him. I often used to wish in those early days that the organization was similar to that of the Army, where a General can, if need be, bring his personal influence to bear on every man of a unit, however large. In the Metropolitan Police the Commissioner is a kind of "veiled prophet" to the majority of

his men. I remember two old inspectors who came to see me on the occasion of their discharge, a custom I carried out with all officers of and above the rank of sergeant, telling me that in their thirty-five years' service they had never spoken to a Commissioner.

Seeing men on discharge and on promotion were about the only opportunities one had of speaking to any considerable number, except at social gatherings or sports meetings. In comparatively small police forces, outside London, consisting of anything up to a couple of thousand men, there is nothing to prevent a Chief of Police, after a few years, knowing every man in his force, but with the twenty thousand men in London it is a different matter. It was this difficulty more than anything else that caused me as soon as possible to recast the duties of the Chief Constables so that they might serve as my eyes and ears among the force.

In one or two little matters of discipline I was able to effect changes which were welcomed. A policeman is in reality under no disciplinary code in the correct sense of the term. For civil offences he is amenable to the law in the same way as any civilian, while for breaches of police rules and regulations he can be fined, reduced in rank, or dismissed by the Commissioner, who is assisted by Discipline Boards whose procedure is akin to that of courts-martial. A system of fines spreading over months and even years had crept into the force, which I abolished, because it had the effect of taking the heart of a man just as if he was under the nightmare of a moneylender's clutches. The fines were reduced in amounts, but had to be paid off without delay. A man thus suffered heavily for his fault for a month, after which he regained his full pay.

Another innovation was the privilege accorded to men who were brought before Discipline Boards to have a member of the force to assist them in their defence.

Early in October the question of sending more men from the Metropolitan Police to the Army came up for consideration, and I decided that a thousand could be spared. This caused a flutter in the Police Union dovecots, and they were good enough to inform me that in their opinion the safety of the streets would be endangered, a matter which, of course, was no concern of theirs. What did alarm them was that the next thousand men from the force might embrace some or all of the union executive, a disaster of the first magnitude in their eyes. The former quotas from the force had been drawn successively from men with the shortest service, and another thousand would certainly have included some of the more energetic strikers, "a consummation most devoutly to be wished." The war, however, came to an end before final arrangements could be made, and the union was saved from any further display of patriotism.

About the same time Sir Frederick Wodehouse resigned, his health having been indifferent for some time, and I was able to secure the services of Brigadier-General Horwood in his place, an appointment which introduced the necessary vitality and up-to-date initiative required at the moment.

In addition to the ordinary routine of my appointment, carried on while endeavouring to pick up the threads of the organization, my attention was directed mainly to the working of the Representative Board, and the machinations of Police-constable Marston and his executive, because I realized that there lay the crux of the future of the force. At the first meeting of the Board, which took place on 17th October, 1918, I addressed the representatives at some length in order that they might know exactly how I viewed the situation, and it may be of interest to reproduce my remarks as they throw some light on the state of the force at the time.

"I am very glad to-day to meet the elected members of the first Police Representative Board, and to have the opportunity of making their acquaintance and of inaugurating a link between all ranks of the force

to which we are proud to belong which will, I trust, prove to be a panacea for any discontent or trouble that may have grown up in the past. Although I am unable to divest myself of my official position, I wish you once and for all to understand that when I accepted this office I did so with the determination that, so far as the force is concerned, the terms 'Commissioner' and 'friend' would be synonymous. In any organized force it is impossible that contentment and efficiency should exist unless founded upon mutual trust and confidence between those whose duty it is to administer that force and those who form the bulk of that force.

"That there are grievances in every walk of life is an undoubted fact; some of these grievances may be well founded, others imaginary, and I have no doubt that even in the best-organized institutions there is always room for improvement in this direction, and it was on this account that when I assumed office I searched about for a means by which a channel of communication from the most junior constable on beat should be open to my own office. But in order that this Board may entirely fulfil the functions for which it has been created it is necessary that it should start fair on a foundation of mutual trust and confidence between the men it represents and myself.

"In a large force such as ours there must be many individuals who have extreme, if not Utopian, ideas—ideas which are incompatible with the first principles of a body such as that to which we belong, whose first duty it is to carry out faithfully the duty we owe to the State, and to maintain an absolutely impartial position towards the various sections of the community without favour or bias, in order that our duty may be above suspicion. Now it is for this Board to sift carefully the various points and suggestions that may be brought before it, and to use its common sense, its knowledge of the world, and of the obligations imposed upon the keepers of law and order, so as not to advance schemes and ideas which are, on the face of them, impossible. Any other course would only waste time which could be more profitably employed, and might endanger the mutual relations between us.

"I have no wish to refer to the occurrences which took place during the last week of August—occurrences which, I regret to say, have shaken the trust and affection of London for its police, and it will be, I fear, some time before we can restore ourselves in the public confidence. That we should do so is, I feel sure, your wish as well as mine. Only a few days ago I read the following in a paper with wide circulation: 'The strike of the police swept away the moral supremacy of the man in blue, the growth of seventy years, which was the envy of every capital in the world.' Even from a material point of view this is important because we know how indebted our benevolent funds are to the goodwill of the public.

"And now one word, and I hope the last word that I shall ever have to speak, on the subject of the union. I am quite aware that considerable

pressure has been exerted to ensure the return of union men to this Board, and among you I see several who are prominent members of that organization. Well, let me say at once that I am glad of it, because it is far better that there should be no hidden ulcer behind the Metropolitan Police Board which might rankle and destroy the usefulness of its deliberations. At the same time I wish to say this: you are aware that it has been laid down that the Police Union is not recognized by the Government, and, therefore, from my point of view, it has nothing whatever to do with the force for which I am responsible. During the last three or four weeks occasions have come to my notice where the names of men who are not members of the union have been posted on station notice boards, presumably with the intention of putting pressure upon them to join the union. Representations have further reached me from men practically asking for protection against the pressure brought to bear on them by the union. If there is truth in this, it must stop. No outside body has any right to interfere with the discipline or with the freedom of any members of the force. My point of view in such matters is that every man should be quite free to do as he pleases. If he wishes to join the union there is no official bar to it, but if he does not wish to join no pressure of any kind should be applied, directly or indirectly. So far as lies in my power I shall take steps to protect men against illegitimate pressure which interferes with their rights as free men and as members of the force.

"Another matter, and that is more serious, is that members of the force have interested themselves as members of the union in the affairs of police organizations which have nothing to do with the Metropolitan Police. I speak of such places as Sunderland, Woolwich and Portsmouth. Now I quite see that those who took this step did so in their capacity as members of the union, but, to my mind, they placed their position as members of the union before that of members of the Metropolitan Police, so that the position arose that complaints were received from local authorities against the action of certain members of this force. I do not know how you may look at it, but, personally, if any outsider came to a body with which I was connected and attempted to teach me what to do I should resent it, both as an interference, and also on the ground of *esprit de corps*. My view would be that the body I belonged to was quite able to manage its own affairs. It seems to me very much the same as the old story of a quarrel between a man and his wife, but when a third person came in and tried to interfere the two at once became friends and kicked the third party out of the house.

"The strike is now a thing of the past, and I hope there will never be occasion to refer to it again, but I equally hope that by advice and example this Board, representing every section of the Metropolitan Police, will use its utmost endeavours to wash the slate clean and to re-establish

the force in the confidence of the public and of our armies now in the field. We cannot get on without the public, and the public have no wish to get on without us or to substitute another body in our place. Do not make any mistake about this. I can tell you that it was by no means an uncommon thing to hear that German money and influence was at the bottom of the whole trouble. I do not for a moment believe it myself, and never did, but there are people who do, and such people may have grounds which appear plausible to support their idea. I only tell you this, so that you may look at the subject from every point of view, and I also tell you that I believe that any man in this force, whether he remained on duty or not on the 31st August last, would, in his indignation, knock down any person who told him that he had been influenced by enemy wiles and money.

“ There is, I understand, an idea among some of the men that the members of the union, particularly the prominent ones, are what they are pleased to call ‘ marked men.’ So far as I am concerned, it matters not to me whether a man belongs to the union or whether he does not, provided he carries out in spirit and to the letter his duties as a member of this force. In my own mind certain men are ‘ marked men.’ There are two categories: the men whom I come to know as being especially noticeable for their cleverness, devotion to duty, loyalty and interest in the force to which they belong; and those who do not carry out their duty in the way which it should be done. The first category would be men marked by me to be watched and noted for promotion; the second category, men whom I should get rid of as being unsuited to the work.

“ The minutes of the Board will be open to my inspection, and possibly you may think it advisable not to enter the names of proposers and seconders of proposals. If so, I quite agree. But in order to enable me to gauge the feeling of the Committee or Board on proposals which are not carried unanimously, I should be glad always to know the result of the voting, for and against in figures. I need hardly say that I hope the operations of this Board will be absolutely fair and above board. No backstairs influence, no underground machinations, but fair play between the men you represent, yourselves and myself. If so, I believe that to-day will inaugurate a system which will result in making this force the most efficient and contented police force in the world, as it was till lately the example of every police force wherever its name was mentioned. But to do so we must ‘ Play the game.’

“ In looking down the list of representatives I noticed that the very large majority are constables, with a sprinkling of sergeants and one officer of higher rank. I hear that among the higher ranks there is a feeling that because they are so scantily represented their interests may suffer, but I feel sure that the matter can be left to your feelings of justice,

and that the interests of the inspectors and sergeants will receive as much consideration at your hands as those of the constables.

“ Another little point I should like to mention is that I have heard it said that the new draft of men for the Army is a form of retaliation. I can assure you that the question of sending more men to the Army was being considered long before I ever had any connection with the police. In any case, I hope that there is not a single man in the force who has the least reluctance to fight for his country when he is given the opportunity. I can tell you this, that if I could be told to-day that I was to take every able-bodied man in the force over to France with me next week, there would not be a happier man in England, and I venture to say that we should enjoy ourselves far more hunting the Boche back to his native land than in treading the streets of London.

“ It is my intention, if all goes well, to take this Board into my confidence when I am considering changes in connection with the organization of the force, and I thought you would be interested to know some of the points to which I have given much thought, and which I hope to enlarge upon as time goes on.

“ I have decided to divide the Metropolitan area into four districts, and eventually to each of these districts to appoint a Chief Constable. These Chief Constables will live and have their offices in their district, and I look to them to keep that touch with all ranks of the force, which I am unable to do myself owing to its size, and in fact to act as my eyes and ears in regard to every matter connected with the force. It is my wish that these officers should be regarded by all ranks not only as senior officers, but also as friends—friends to whom any man will go for advice either on official or private matters.

“ I have heard it said that there is an objection to men being ‘ spied upon ’ by officials in plain clothes. On the other hand, I am told that if the senior officers of the police wear uniform a cry at once goes up that the police are being militarized. Personally I do not understand why the wearing of uniform should mean militarism, as, if such is the case, there must be an objection to the gold-peaked hat worn by a station-master. But, however that may be, I am turning over in my mind whether it will not be better for officers when on duty to wear uniform, at all events to a greater extent than has been the custom in the past.

“ Two other very important points have been also occupying my mind. The system of promotion and the scales of punishment, both of which I intend to investigate thoroughly.

“ Another matter is the dislike, which I am told exists, to transfer from one division to another, and I am informed that in many cases police officers settle down in a suburban division on account of the health of

their wives and families. It seems to me that it cannot be good for efficiency for men to take root too deeply in one spot for a long period of years. Not only is it unfair to men who have to live in less pleasant localities, for without doubt police duty in the vicinity of Twickenham, for example, is more pleasant than duty in the Mile End Road. Of course I know, especially at the present time, the difficulty there is in obtaining accommodation, and I fully appreciate that no man likes to be shifted about frequently from one place to another. At the same time there are grounds I think for inquiry as to whether, in some respects, the idea that transfer is looked upon as a grievance and not as a necessity to the efficiency of the force and fairness to all its members is justified.

“ One last point. There are various Boards and institutions connected with the Metropolitan Police on which I notice the lower ranks are unrepresented. Without committing myself to a definite line of policy, I propose to investigate that matter, and to see whether it is not possible to widen the representation of the force in connection with any of our institutions which cater for all ranks.

“ These are all matters which, as I told you, I have in my mind to look into, but do not run away with the idea that it can all be brought about in the twinkling of an eye, because I am a great believer in not committing myself to a definite line until I am quite sure that I see that there are no obstacles along the road in front. At the same time I do not propose to lose sight of these matters, but to take them up one after the other until I am satisfied that everything that is possible has been done. In the meantime, your Board is, I feel sure, going to help. If, as is possible, I want your advice, I shall let you know at one of your meetings that I propose to attend, and in the same way if there are any special occasions when you desire my presence I shall be glad to attend.

“ I hope you will not forget what I have said earlier in the course of my remarks, and that is: do not let us waste our time on little trivial points. Very often the smaller and more unimportant the matter, the more trouble and time it takes, and even causes more soreness than a weightier subject. I look to you to sift and talk out with common sense and with your knowledge of men and of the world the various matters which may be brought to your notice, so that we may devote ourselves to the larger and more vital issues which call for immediate attention. The Board should, I suggest, keep clear of personal and individual grievances, which should, at all events in the first instance, come to me through the usual channels. Later on, when we feel ourselves in smooth water, it will be time enough to put some extra paint on the ship.

“ I now leave you to get on with your immediate business: the election of your committee and of your chairman and secretary, and with the hope that this important Board, which is now holding its first meeting, will, from this moment, always be influenced by a feeling not only of loyalty

to those who have elected it, but of equal loyalty and trust in myself and the officers responsible to me for the administration of the force, bearing in mind that our interests are yours. If we work on these lines the great force to which we belong will, as time goes on, be linked up from the Commissioner to the constable in one great bond of sympathy and trust."

When I had finished the men discussed matters between themselves, and later on a deputation of four, headed by Marston, came to put forward certain points on behalf of the Board, the principal ones being in regard to the reinstatement of men who had been dismissed for belonging to the union, and to the drafting of men to the Army. On the question of reinstatement I had little option, as the Prime Minister had agreed to men being members of the union if that body did not interfere with the *affairs of the force*, but, as I have already mentioned, this point was no doubt purposely slurred over when the terms of settlement were made public.

I told the deputation that I had already reinstated several men and would reinstate others who might wish to return to the force and who bore good characters whilst in the Army, or in other occupations, during the time they were away. Men with bad characters and conscientious objectors I would not reinstate, the latter because, apart from other reasons, it would give the whole force a bad name and would lead to unpleasant incidents when soldiers were demobilized from the Army. On the whole we got through our first meeting fairly well, and I was able to see a little further into Marston's character and methods. I made a point of publishing in police orders all points brought to my notice by the Board either in writing or by word of mouth, together with my replies, so that there could be no pretext for hole-and-corner practices.

Within two days of this meeting I had to draw the attention of the secretary of the Board, a constable, to the offensive and peremptory tone of the note he had written demanding the use of the Yard Library, no doubt the result of ignorance and wind in the head.

Every facility was allowed to the Board and to its executive committee, and arrangements were made for station representatives to hold meetings of men at the various stations. I was determined that the scheme should have the fullest possible latitude, being convinced, even in the early days, that it would not be long before the leaders would proceed to extremes which would disgust the bulk of the force and bring the whole agitation to a head.

I had not long to wait. From the beginning of November, 1918, resolutions couched in ever-growing objectionable terms, or touching on points beyond the purview of the Board, increased, attention being drawn to them in the notes published with Police Orders, until on 21st February, 1919, I received a letter from the executive committee of the Board declining to accept as a fact a statement I had made. Before continuing the story of the Representative Board it is necessary to go back a little and glance at the efforts which were being made to secure full recognition of the union. During the General Election of December, 1918, candidates for Parliament were approached to bind themselves to vote for recognition if elected, a line of policy accepted by few outside the ranks of Labour. All through December, 1918, the agitation increased, Marston at one of our interviews telling me that he intended to go on agitating until he had secured full recognition. In the City Police a constable called Zollner (a curiously foreign name) was actively engaged on similar propaganda. The extremists about this time started a small newspaper called *The Police and Prison Officers' Magazine*, the first copy of which appeared on 19th December, 1918.

This magazine was most useful for following the progress of the union, and enlightening me on many points affecting my own position. For instance, Police-constable Patterson, the secretary of the executive committee of the Board and a somewhat prolific writer, informed his readers that "if the Commissioner,

or any person holding an equivalent position, refuses to give the Representative Board any satisfaction on a just and reasonable request, the Board immediately places the matter before the executive committee of the union." And again : "There is one point which must not be lost sight of, and that is every member of the Board must be a union member, and that *only union members' complaints will be considered by the Board*. I know that the authorities will say that this is victimization, but I will refer them to a very old saying : 'Self-preservation is the first law of Nature.' "

That the late strike had been encouraged by outside influences was evident from a communication to the magazine on 19th December, 1918, by Police-constable Zollner that "without Labour the strike last August would have been a fiasco." Just before Christmas, 1918, the action of the hotheads appeared so threatening, and their attitude towards myself so overbearing, that for some weeks I thought it not unlikely that they might attempt to call the force out a second time. The fact was that the bulk of the force were steadily settling down, being satisfied with the concessions already made by the Government and with the reforms which had been introduced, and were also becoming weary of the increasingly dictatorial tone assumed by Marston and certain members of the executive of the Board towards all whose ideas differed from theirs.

The supporters of the union were sharp enough to realize that the ground was slipping away from under their feet, and that the results of the coming election for the new Representative Board in March would be dissappointing from the union point of view. It was therefore just possible that a *coup d'état* might be attempted, and while I was confident that the majority of the force would stand firm, I secretly took steps to ensure that any attempt at a strike should, without an hour's delay, be nipped in the bud. Orders were drafted ready for issue notifying the force that any

man who failed to turn out for duty when called upon would be summarily dismissed, and arrangements were made with the military authorities at once to occupy ninety pivotal police stations with small detachments of soldiers in order to give protection and confidence to the men who might remain loyal. The remaining stations I proposed to leave to their fate for the moment. The military also agreed to provide motor-cycle and side-car men in case the telephone system broke down. Whether these preparations leaked out, or whether the extremists changed their plans in view of the General Election I do not know, but if they intended to make use of the strike weapon at all, they committed a tactical error in postponing it for eight months, when the loyalty of the force enabled me to cope with it without recourse to the military. The men who were the principal leaders in the agitation were Police-constables Marston, Crisp, and Thiel of the Metropolitan Police, and Zollner and Simmonds of the City Police.

During the whole time I was Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police my relations with Sir William Nott-Bower, the Commissioner of Police of the City of London, were close and most cordial, and together we discussed and arranged plans for the defeat of our respective agitators. But the presence in the heart of the metropolis of a force of some twelve hundred men entirely separate from, and independent of, the twenty thousand Metropolitan Police by whom it is surrounded is an anachronism which I consider should be abolished. Apart from the very considerable extra expense entailed by the upkeep of the two forces, the arrangement is vicious when the safety of the whole capital is at stake, and in case of unrest among the police the situation becomes considerably complicated, the extremists in the two forces being able to play into each other's hands.

I was given to understand that the main difficulty against the fusion of the two forces was the fear of encroaching on the dignity of the City Fathers. If that is so I suggest that the economies

which would result should override all other considerations, whilst if thought advisable arrangements could doubtless be made for the provision of a small specially selected force of fifty or a hundred men to be the personal police force of the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen, to be paid by them, and to be under the orders of the Lord Mayor for all ceremonials as well as for the protection of the Mansion House and Guildhall. In suggesting such a radical innovation I hope I do not do violence to the liberties of the capital of our Empire, but from a purely police point of view, whether for the preservation of order, ceremonials, traffic control or unity of command, I do not think an argument can be brought forward against the suggestion, while from the point of view of economy the present system is costly in the extreme.

During the autumn of 1918 the eddies of my agitators' efforts were being felt in most police forces throughout the country, and in some cases were aggravated by police authorities in which Labour possessed a dominating influence. I received instructions to look into the matter and to report what steps might be advisable to cope with it. A very useful discussion took place at Scotland Yard with certain Chief Constables from different parts of the country at which we agreed that while any move towards the nationalization of the police under a central Government authority would be strenuously opposed by county and local bodies, certain steps could at once be taken to improve the position then existing. Shortly, these were an increase in the number of inspectors of police at the Home Office, the existing number being insufficient to keep up effective touch between the Home Office and the country police forces, and incidentally between the country forces themselves; all police questions at the Home Office to be dealt with by one official, instead of being passed about to several departments; greater similarity in the police uniforms throughout the country, a seemingly small matter but one of importance when police are drafted from one district to another, and can be recog-

nized by their distinctive uniforms by those who may be disturbing the peace ; and finally a normal code of punishments throughout the country, it being found that punishments for similar offences varied enormously in different police forces. A good many other points were discussed, and I took the opportunity of expressing my desire that the closest touch should be maintained between Scotland Yard and the police forces outside the metropolis, a line of policy which I gathered had not formerly been emphasized. Since the time of which I write many improvements have been made in order to bring the police forces closer together, but unfortunately the number of Home Office inspectors is still below what is desirable, the reason being I believe mainly financial. The peace celebrations on 11th November, 1918, passed off without any untoward incidents, reports from all parts of London indicating the utmost good temper and loyalty among the huge crowds. Naturally a few incidents occurred, but the number of persons charged with offences was infinitesimal. Three days later, however, there was a bad outbreak of hooliganism in the West End by mobs led by Colonial soldiers. The situation, which was not without anxiety, was aggravated by the action of some authority, either in the War Office or Board of Works, or both, in permitting the sides of the Mall to be lined with captured German guns without any attempt being made to render them immovable. A mob might in a few minutes have blocked all the approaches to Buckingham Palace with these guns, and have created a serious situation. I wrote a fairly hot letter to my old friends at the War Office, and steps were taken to chain up the guns.

The last ceremonial function of the year 1918, and it occurred just when it was uncertain whether the Police Union would call a strike, was the arrival of President Wilson on 26th December. His Majesty the King with the Queen, Princess Mary, and the Duke of Connaught welcomed him at Charing Cross Station, the

platform being packed with Cabinet Ministers and all sorts of official and unofficial personages. The fleeting impression I gained of the President consisted mainly of a prodigious display of teeth framed in an automatic smile. Happily everything passed off smoothly, and there were no untoward incidents.



END OF VOLUME I.

